UNDER GOLDEN SKIES:

OR,

IN THE NEW ELDORADO.

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UNDER GOLDEN SKIES

OR

IN THE NEW ELDORADO

A Story of Southern Life

BY

A Southern Author

"A child's kiss
Set on thy sighing lips, shall make thee glad;
A poor man served by thee, shall make thee rich;
A sick man helped by thee, shall make thee strong.
Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense
Of service which thou renderest."

—*E. B. Browning.*

"Sometimes fair truth in fiction we disguise;
Sometimes present her naked to men's eyes."

—*Hesiod.*

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DEDICATION.

TO

THE BRAVE AND NOBLE HEROES OF AMERICA,

OUR CHAMPIONS AND DEFENDERS,

WHO BY THEIR UNSELFISH COURAGE AND MODEST HEROISM,

AS WELL AS THEIR LOVE OF JUSTICE AND HUMANITY,

HAVE MADE THE HISTORY OF OUR WAR A GLORIOUS HERITAGE,

IS THIS BOOK DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR

AS A

SLIGHT MEMORIAL OF HER ADMIRATION FOR THEIR GALLANT DEEDS.

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INTRODUCTORY.

In that splendid book that barely falls short of inspiration—the wonder of childhood and the comfort of old age—the master-piece of quaint and saintly John Bunyan, the picture of the Wicker Gate, though an eventide scene and done in sombre colors, is always vivid in the mind, for it is the "Alabama," "the here we rest" of Pilgrim's Progress.

Did ever absorbed, enraptured child put the book aside for the good-night kiss and "Now I lay me," and the trundle-bed until tired Christian was safe within the portals of the Wicker Gate? And over it was the inscription: "Knock and it shall be opened unto you." The first welcome to the pilgrim on his way to the Celestial City!

Descending from the sacred to the secular, not the slightest irreverence is intended in the statement that the earnest youth, seeking a life-mission, will find the word "Welcome" above the open portals at the entering in to the Old North State. The young Puritan barrister, Waitstill Avery, with a Princeton sheepskin in his pocket and a brace of horse-pistols at his saddle-horn, who rode his sturdy nag from far New England, through forest and swamp a hundred

years ago, to pitch his tent in the hill-country of North Carolina, found this cordial welcome: and so likewise the young man of to-day who rode into our midst in his palace-car from the great metropolis to build his splendid castle in the sheltering circle of the everlasting hills that guard the good State's western border.

"Welcome" is the word, indeed, and yet honesty requires another inscription to be posted at our doors: "North Carolina—the State that makes history but rarely writes it." So proverbial has this saying become that there has been added to the State coat-of-arms the motto: "*Esse quam videri.*"

In too great modesty, as a State, lies the danger that the fortune-seeker and the home-builder and the man with a mission or a message for the world will pass us by to settle in some sister State that takes the better care of the worth and heroism of her sons.

With some such thoughts as these in mind, and some such fears weighing upon the heart, the author was impelled in recent years to write this story of Southern life, "Under Golden Skies." An undying love for North Carolina and her brave people, with indignation over abuse sometimes unjustly heaped upon the State, prompted this effort—whatever be its results—to aid in setting the good State aright before those who

know her least. And such an effort will surely receive the commendation of all true North Carolinians.

Then, too, this sketch of North Carolina life is intended to illustrate the actual history of the period covered in the narrative. The characters of the story are generally taken from real life. The purely imaginary characters introduced are few; but even these are all very real to the author. The writer of these introductory lines, during almost a decade in which he has been honored with the friendship of the author, has often noted the enthusiastic affection she entertained for the people in her book. These children of the imagination have all become entangled in the heart-strings of the author. It is related of Thackery that, being asked the cause of a burst of tears one day, he replied: "I have killed Colonel Newcombe!" How dear to the heart of an author is the family of book-children!

The story is more than founded on fact. It is a story of all facts. The little fiction in it is chiefly to link together the real episodes in the history of friends in the flesh and to make the sketch an harmonious whole.

Supremest motive of all, the book is sent forth by the author in the loving hope that it may appeal to "the angels of our better natures;" that it may stimulate to a truer, better, richer,

higher, holier life; that it may shed some sunshine into darkened hearts, some melody in songless lives; that it may encourage desponding souls to mount up, in hope and faith, as on eagles' wings, above obscuring clouds, until, "Under Golden Skies" indeed, they bask continually in the flooding sunlight of God's love and peace and promises.

HOWARD A. BANKS.

Charlotte, N. C., August 30, 1898.

UNDER GOLDEN SKIES;

OR,

IN THE NEW ELDORADO.

CHAPTER I.

One, two,—Dr. Leslie paused suddenly in his walk and bent his head in an attitude of rapt attention, and for a moment listened.

Vaguely, from a distance, away in the direction of the quiet Moravian town which nestled twin-like beside its favored sister, rang out in solemn chimes from the old church gable, three, four, five o'clock!—the mellow sound throbbing and receding upon the crisp morning air like a half-heard, elusive strain of melody as it teasingly touched the consciousness,—then languished and died away in the restful stillness.

The balmy spring weather was gloriously beautiful, such as comes to the Old North State in the month of May, and the soft air smelt of the blended fragrance of roses and violets. The heaven was without a cloud, but a pearly white mist loitered in the atmosphere of the upper calm which the rosy radiance of the ascending sun began to lift as it rapidly suffused the eastern horizon.

During the night a gentle rain had fallen, and under the first quivering sunbeams of dawn the waving grasses and tender foliage of the trees and shrubbery took on a deeper brilliancy.

As Dr. Leslie slowly paced back and forth the long veranda of his handsome residence, inhaling with a sense of the keenest enjoyment the dewy freshness of the early morning, there was no sound as yet astir about the house and premises save the echo of his own measured footfall, and the rapturous trill of a mocking bird that swayed himself to and fro on the topmost bough of an ancient oak on the velvety green lawn; but low and indistinct at first, then deepening in intensity every moment, the sound of busy life increased. To the eastward the shrill whistle of the steam-engine, mellowed by the distance, shortly followed by the sudden clash and clangor of moving trains. Somewhere round the corner a drowsy cock crowed long and mournfully, then another and another took up the friendly challenge, answering defiantly and vigorously, while the resonant notes seemed to hang tentatively in the clear fragrant air. Across the way a savage-looking dog, cropped-eared and short of tail, pranced and barked furiously at a stray cat he had nosed prowling suspiciously about his private domain, and when he had rebuked the feline tramp for its intrusion it had fled precipitately to the top of the gate post, where it sat curling and beating its tail in a tigerish sort of way and glaring angrily down upon its noisy tormentor.

When the town clock sent forth another warning the bright, busy city was fairly awake. The great factory whistles screamed and shrilled in every direction, and soon the streets were thronged with workmen, clerks and salesmen, gayly jesting and gossipping together as they hurried along toward the scene of their daily tasks.

Ere long the noisy clattering and jangle of grocery-, milk-wagons and drays added variety to the medley, while above the din rose the harsh discordant clangor of the electric street cars, half filled with passengers, as they whirred and dashed breezily past along their level track.

Dr. Leslie paused when he had reached the end of the veranda where a luxuriant rose-vine clambered over the roof, to pluck a cluster of the fragrant flowers, and just then a suddenly awakened wind swayed the heavily freighted branches and flung a shower of golden rose petals at his feet, making yellow stains upon the polished floor.

As he turned to resume his walk, in the full enjoyment of the vivid picture before him, his ear caught the grinding noise of brisk, heavy footsteps coming up the graveled walk. His handsome face beamed with a perfunctory smile as he cast a swift glance in the direction of the sound, and he walked alertly forward to the front of the veranda.

"How are you, Leary? Come in, come in, you are out early," said the doctor, with the cordial familiarity in tone and manner of an old friend, at the same time extending a plump white hand as his visitor hesitated upon the steps.

"No, thanks; I haven't time really. I just called to see if Carl has decided to go with me to Europe? He told me he thought he should be able to get off by the time I was ready to leave."

Mr. Leary took off his stiff black hat and leaned against one of the fluted pillars, and nervously combed his long fingers through his dark hair, which was beginning to show strands of gray.

"Well, yes; that is a matter I want to speak with you about. Come, let us talk it over."

Dr. Leslie stepped quickly into the hall, laid the roses he held in his hand upon the table, and brought out two chairs.

"Carl ran over to the University day before yesterday," he resumed, "to take part with the Glee Club in a concert. What I want to say is this: he is anxious to go abroad, and I've always intended he should as soon as he had finished his studies at the University; and really I do not know any better opportunity for him to take this trip than now. The president of the University, who takes a great interest in him, has advised him to go by all means, spend the summer traveling with you on the continent and then enter at Heidelberg or Leipzig. I heartily approve of the plan. We've talked the matter over with his mother and it meets her approval also."

Mr. Leary listened with a look of pleased satisfaction, occasionally nodding his head softly, and otherwise manifesting the most vivid interest. Then he said approvingly:

"Yes, it seems that one's education can hardly be called complete in this day without an European excursion as a final touch to the home polish. As soon as my wife found out that I was going abroad, she insisted that I should put off the trip a few weeks until Kate was graduated from the Academy, so they could accompany me. I am glad now that I did so."

"How soon do you expect to start, and on what steamer?" Dr. Leslie asked.

"That I don't know just now. I am expecting letters this morning which will influence my decision. I think the Germanic sails about

the first of June, and it is more than likely I shall go by that."

Mr. Leary got upon his feet and hastened to say, as he looked at his watch: "But I must be going. Can't you come down, say about ten or eleven o'clock? and by that time I may be better able to give you my plans and the outlines of my trip."

"Yes, I'll be down sometime during the morning. Can't promise what hour. But won't you stay and breakfast with me?—be glad to have you." Dr. Leslie had risen, and stood with his hands clasped behind him.

"Thanks—not this morning, I've been to breakfast." They still stood talking in the fashion common to men when discussing a subject of mutual interest. Mr. Leary looked at his watch again; "I shall expect you down soon—in the course of an hour or two; good-bye."

He started off at a quick, light pace. Half way down the walk he stopped and called back; "By the way, have you heard anything from our old friends out in California lately? I mean Arnold, Glenwood and Talbot?"

"No, not for some time, why?" Dr. Leslie asked quickly while a sudden change passed over his face. The other hesitated a moment as if debating whether to answer directly. But he only said hurriedly—almost abruptly: "Oh, never mind now. Don't let me forget to give you the last San Francisco papers when you come down."

Dr. Leslie watched his retreating figure until it had passed out of sight. He was satisfied that Mr. Leary had some definite motive for asking him that question, and he could not repress the

impulse to wonder what he meant. He tried to shrug away the unaccountable depression that seemed obscurely taking hold of him. From conjectural thoughts his mind easily slipped into pensive reveries, and as his revery deepened, the shadow that drifted across his face evidenced that he suffered.

In this moment of retrospection, he went back as far as the fifties—as remotely as 1859. Without conscious mental effort he recalled minute details that he believed he had entirely forgotten. He remembered reading a book some years ago, giving a most glowing account of the richness, beauty and vastness of California, which lauded the country with little regard to accuracy, the object being to start immigration. The book had been the means of inducing his own parents to go to that beautiful Eldorado.

Among the families who had immigrated from North Carolina with Dr. Leslie's parents were the Glenwoods, his nearest maternal kin, and the Arnolds, Learys and Talbots, the children of whom were his playfellows. He, himself, was too young to have any recollection of the dim fear of danger attendant on so long a journey, but he had often heard his parents recount their trials, until he felt that he too remembered it all and had shared in their anxieties. But he did recall the feeling of wonder and delight he had experienced on coming back to his native place with his widowed mother and two sisters soon after the civil war, and discovering what a magnificent country they had left behind to cast their fortunes in a strange land.

Ignorantly, as thousands of others had done before them, they had left a land of splendid and

endless possibilities, embracing every variety of scenery, soil, climate and production—from blue mountain peaks and pasture lands, to vast plains and river valleys of bottomless alluvium, teeming with all the fruits and fabrics of arctic, temperate and semi-tropical realms—a land that had the finest deciduous trees in the world, the greatest variety of flowering plants, so botanists averred, and a larger variety of mineral wealth than any other State in the Union. All this they had left, and for what purpose?

That they might secure a little more filthy lucre, perhaps more easily and readily, but which fortunes they would have realized at home had they been content to remain within her borders and seek the knowledge and skill wherewith to develop the boundless resources within their reach.

The tide had turned now—yes, was rapidly turning—and he felt a joyous pride in the fact; glad, too, that he had come back to labor and die among a people whose creative power, intelligent enthusiasm and iron-hearted ambition were working out miracles far beyond the most extravagant things that had ever been prophesied about the Old North State.

Indeed, progress had gone on so quietly and unostentatiously in the latter years, that now the whole country was amazed at the development. Assuredly there was no place between the two oceans equal to North Carolina for investment. Gould, Corbin and Vanderbilt had found it out soon, and this had promptly led the van of an immigration from Northern and Western States, which was now growing apace.

Then, with an intensity of sad feeling, Dr.

Leslie mentally recurred to the career of his father. He had been a man of courage, sagacity and generous instincts, and at his death, which occurred many years ago, his family had come into possession of the handsome fortune which he had accumulated so rapidly, and seemingly, so easily. But his death had been a signal for a significant change in the future plans of his family.

After so many years of absence they indulged in some misgivings as to whether they should be able to repurchase the old homestead, and it was with pleased surprise that they had found little difficulty in doing so.

Money, as we all know, is a powerful alchemist; and under its transforming touch the old brick mansion of the Leslies, with its imposing front, impressing one with an air of comfort and homely solidity, literally blossomed as the rose, and to the well-trained eye of the stranger even, it was luminous with intimations as to the real social status of the occupants.

The ringing of the breakfast bell interrupted Dr. Leslie's meditations, and when he entered the bright, pretty room the breakfast was upon the table, but the three occupants had been waiting.

Mrs. Grayson, his widowed sister, a well-preserved woman, gentle and refined in manner, and still wearing the garb of widowhood, though in a modified form, sat by an open window arranging a basket of freshly cut flowers, the sunlight falling upon her sweet, calm face while she talked to Nellie, her little daughter, who was clipping the stems of some of the choicest roses and dressing a tiny vase of her own which stood

upon the window-sill. Carl, her son, a handsome young man of not quite twenty-two years, stood beside her, one hand easily resting upon the back of her chair, and in the other he held The Sentinel, a daily paper, from which he had been reading to her a spicy editorial on a mooted question of local interest.

The room, which was large and lofty, had that air of comfort and refinement which bespoke the cultivated taste of the owner, as well as the appropriateness of its purpose. Everything seemed specially suited to it, from the pretty etchings on the frescoed wall, and a few rare pieces of bric-a-brac scattered about to please the eye, to the white damasked table with its exquisite service of rose-tinted china and resplendent silver.

"Oh, Uncle Ralph, you're late,' exclaimed Nellie whirling around as Dr. Leslie entered the room; "Mamma rang the breakfast bell twice; and why didn't you come?"

"I was talking with Mr. Leary when the first bell rang, I suppose, and didn't hear it," Dr. Leslie explained to Mrs. Grayson's glance, and Nellie's good-natured plaint. "I'm sorry I kept you waiting, but I'll try not to do it any more."

"See here, Uncle Ralph, aren't these beautiful?—and ugh!" smelling them—"they are just as sweet as can be!" shouted Nellie, holding up with triumphant glee the flowers she had been arranging.

"Yes, they are as pretty and sweet as little Nell," he said with a specious brightness, encircling the tiny waist with one arm, and kissing the dimpled cheek. "But let's have breakfast now, and not keep mamma and Carl waiting any longer."

"All right, sir." She set the vase upon the table between her own and her uncle's plate, and climbed nimbly up into her baby chair on his right. She scarcely waited for him to finish the blessing before she began again with voluble animation.

"Mamma's going to take her flowers to Daisy Nelson, because Daisy says she loves to have flowers about her when she's sick—said she got so tired looking at the dark-papered walls; and the pictures of those old-timey, funny looking men hanging over the mantel looked as if they were making faces at her. I asked her to let me pull them down and burn them up, but she wouldn't do it—she said her mamma would scold us like anything if we did."

"How is the child, Helen? have you seen her in the last day or two?" Dr. Leslie addressed himself to Mrs. Grayson, who had taken her seat at the head of the table.

"I'm afraid she isn't any better. I was to see her on yesterday. Mrs. Nelson said she had taken no solid food for several days. I don't like her symptoms, and wish you would call to see her to-day if you can."

"Yes, I will," he assented. "But I must see Leary the first thing this morning on some business, and afterwards I'll call to see the child. I hope yet she may pull through this last attack."

For a moment he paused, then turned to Carl.

"If you have no special engagement for this morning, I should like you to go with me to Leary's office. He and I were talking about—" But Dr. Leslie was interrupted by a tap on the door.

'What is it, Virgil?"

A servant had entered the room with the morning's mail, which he handed to Carl, who sat nearest the door. The letters were all addressed to his uncle except one, which was for himself from a old schoolmate whose familiar handwriting he readily recognized. He handed the magazines to his mother, the letters and papers to his uncle, and then prepared to read his own letter.

"I guess my letters can wait," said Dr. Leslie, eyeing the budget as he laid it beside his plate and went on with his breakfast.

"Uncle Ralph you do get so many letters! Do you read every single one of them and send answers to them?" asked Nellie earnestly, surveying her uncle's mail.

"Why, yes, my dear, I read them all, but it is not always necessary to answer every one I get. When you are older and learn how to write maybe you'll help me with my correspondence—be a sort of private secretary for me, you know. Many charming women are making an undeniable success in such a position at present."

"Oh, I'll never be smart enough to write for you, Uncle Ralph." Nellie paused and was silent for a moment, then she burst out as if a new idea had suddenly occurred to her—something she had never thought of before, but something luminous with possibilities for her uncle.

"Why don't you get married, Uncle Ralph, and then you would have some one to help you to write your letters? That would be the very thing."

A warning look and a significant shake of the head from her mother silenced her, while she wondered what she was saying so dreadful that her mother would want her to hush.

Meanwhile Carl had read his letter. With a troubled expression on his face he resumed his breakfast, trying to appear as usual, but failed utterly.

After making a light breakfast he strolled to the window and looked out, then walked back and stood with one arm resting on the mantel.

"Uncle, I have a letter from Cecil Brian; you remember him I suppose?"

"Brian? Cecil Brian?" Dr. Leslie contracted his eyebrows. "Yes, I think I do remember the name."

Carl refreshed his memory.

"He is my old friend and classmate, and I introduced him to you at the University Commencement last summer. He and I were graduated at the same time. Cecil writes me that he has decided to go to Europe this summer to study Art. He says he wishes to spend one year in Paris and afterward spend several months visiting the most famous art galleries in other European cities. He wants to join Mr. Leary's party, and so writes to know when he expects to go abroad, and all the particulars.

"In about two weeks he will be in Philadelphia, and says if Mr. Leary has decided to leave at about that time, he will join him in Philadelphia and accompany him to New York. Now if I can find out from Mr. Leary to-day, what his plans are, I can write Cecil at once."

"That was my object in asking you to go with me this morning," said his uncle. "It was to talk this matter over. But I'll run through my mail now, and in about an hour and a half I'll meet you at Mr. Leary's office."

Dr. Leslie turned and began opening his letters.

Carl still lingered in the room, but he had moved to the window again. In the interval of silence that ensued a shadow had overspread Mrs. Grayson's usually calm face.

Carl stood irresolute for a second's space, then crossed the room to his mother and stooped and kissed her; then suddenly left the room.

"Dear boy; how I shall miss him when he's gone," Mrs. Grayson said, as if talking to herself.

She sighed softly, took up the magazine and as she turned to quit the room cast a swift glance at her brother, and the expression on his face at once arrested her attention. She stopped abruptly. He was intensely absorbed reading a letter which was closely written on crisp white note paper, and of considerable length.

As he eagerly read on, thrusting the loose sheets between the trellises of his fingers, an ashy pallor settled on his countenance. He presently looked up, and rose, apparently with an effort.

"Helen, come with me into the sitting-room," he said; "I have a letter to submit to you, and I wish your advice."

"Certainly, Ralph; I am sorry too that you've received news that gives you pain," she said very gravely; then followed her brother to the sitting-room, and when she had entered he handed her a letter which was post-marked San Francisco, and directed in large but not very legible handwriting.

Then he drew a chair near the centre table confronting her, and while waiting for her to read the letter, battled the ground over and over again with the bitter memories of the past.

CHAPTER II.

After Mrs. Grayson had read the letter there came a singular calm. In the last few minutes she appeared to have grown older, her face reflecting the expession of her brother's visage, from which all life seemed to have gone out.

He raised his eyes to her face and saw the expression of expectancy upon it.

"I have so much confidence in your judgment, Helen," he began, "that I wish your advice in a matter of such vital importance as this. Arnold's letter demands a definite and immediate response."

Dr. Leslie's tone was quiet, and in a measure he had regained that calm superiority of manner which habitually characterized his bearing, but which a momentary weakness had shaken.

Mrs. Grayson stopped and picked up a part of the letter that had slipped to the floor, and when she had lifted her head, her face was suddenly aglow with the new, noble purpose which filled her heart, and became almost radiant as she bravely addressed him.

"Ralph, if you have forgiven Frank Arnold for all the injury and sorrow that his sin and duplicity brought upon you in your early years —forgiven him for robbing you of so much that made life happy and beautiful—forgiven your once trusted and devotedly loved friend for coming between you and the one woman to whom you had declared your love and hope—and the memory of which still brings mournful shadows to your face—then surely your own heart will dictate to you the best answer to return to a dying man's request, when he asks you to take his

orphan child under your roof and guardianship, and be to her a counselor and a protector."

She paused and looked into his dark gray eyes, which were misty with tears. She put out her hand and laid it on his. The soft touch of the warm palm seemed to soothe him.

"Thank you Helen," he said. "I fully comprehend what duty requires of me, and your wise reasoning commends itself to my better nature; but for a time I was so jarred and stunned by Arnold's unexpected and extraordinary letter that I was quite powerless amidst the ebb and flow of conflicting emotions to determine what course best to pursue. I realize, too, the grave responsibility I must assume in becoming the counselor and guardian of Arnold's child."

"Ralph, my sympathies are already deeply enlisted in behalf of this poor child, and I believe that I shall love her very dearly, even if she but be half as lovely as her father has represented."

"How old is she? I do not remember whether Arnold or Mr. Bently stated."

"Singularly enough her father failed to mention her age, and so did Mr. Bently, his solicitor who subjoined the postscript on a separate sheet after Mr. Arnold's death," said Mrs. Grayson. "As she is the youngest, and I infer from this letter the only surviving child of three children by his second marriage, presumably she is not more than eight or nine years of age. Mr. Arnold spoke of her as 'Little Ruth' all through his letter."

She paused a moment, then went on. "It is passing strange to me that he should have called this child for the wife whose fair young life he blighted, and whose proud sensitive heart he so

mercilessly broke after one short year of married misery and neglect."

There was a tender vibration in Mrs. Grayson's voice, as if she were trying to suppress unbidden tears.

"When was Arnold's letter written?"

"On the 10th, and this is the 18th. Should Mr. Glenwood and his family leave San Francisco for New York the first week in June, as they purpose doing—so Mr. Bently writes—and if Ruth is to accompany them to the latter city in the event Mr. Bently hears from you favorably before they start, you would better answer his letter by return mail."

The clock on the mantel struck ten. Dr. Leslie rose at once. "It is useless to wait dinner for me, Helen," he said. "I had hoped to dine with you and your friends to-day, but I hardly think I shall be able to do so now. I shall go to Leary's office the first thing, for I suspect Carl is waiting for me there, then call to see several patients, and afterward come by Mrs. Nelson's to see Daisy."

Mrs. Grayson made no answer, for her brother crossed the room while he was still talking, passed on to the veranda and called to Virgil to saddle his horse.

It was all plain now, why Leary had asked him about their old friends in California. Doubtless he had seen an account of Arnold's death. He winced as he thought of what his interview with Mr. Leary must inevitably lead to after the matter of Carl's trip had been discussed and arranged, and now he rather shrank from meeting him—his trusted friend too, so soon after the old wound had been probed.

When he had gone Mrs. Grayson walked to

the window and looked vaguely out on the sunshine gold that filtered through the tender leaves and glinted on the rippling wavelets in the basin of the fountain. How lovely it all was! There seemed nothing to mar the exquisiteness of the perfect scene; and yet what a depth of anguish there was in her wearied heart.

So vividly came to her as she stood there, the closing lines of "The Tapestry Weavers"—that beautiful poem which on one memorable occasion she had heard recited with such thrilling pathos by the late Henry W. Grady, of Georgia—the Hero of his nation—one who was so generally admired and so much beloved that to hundreds of thousands throughout the sunny Southland his early death came as a personal bereavement.

She seemed strangely lifted up by the everlasting Arms of Love as the Angel of peace soothingly whispered:

"And when his task is ended, and his web is turned and strown
"He shall hear the voice of the Master. It shall say to him, 'Well done!'
"And the white-winged angels of heaven, to bear him hence, shall come down;
"And for his wage shall give him, not coin, but a golden crown."

Nellie's voice broke the silence. At that moment she came laughing and romping up the serpentine walk, with a skip and a bound, swinging her broad-brimmed hat, and Bruce, her large New Foundland dog, racing playfully by her side.

"Where have you been, Nellie?" asked Mrs. Grayson. "Your slippers are muddy, and your sash all crumpled. Come here and let me arrange it, and then let Julia brush your slippers."

Mrs. Grayson gently drew Nellie towards her, smoothed out the creased folds of her sash and then fastened it. Then she brushed back some of the straggling strands blown from her flossy curls, which hung like tangled silk over her dimpled shoulders.

Nellie looked down with an apologetical expression at her muddy shoes, then round at her mother.

"I'm so sorry, Mamma; but I've been to the stable to see Beppo, Uncle Ralph's new horse, and Virgil let me ride him two or three times round the stable lot. Oh, Mamma, if you just would buy me a little saddle—a nice little side-saddle like Amy Finley's, you know, Mamma? Virgil says I may ride every day, and then I'll soon learn to ride as nicely as Carl or Uncle Ralph."

Mrs. Grayson smiled. "Very well; we'll see about it. But you musn't attempt to ride Beppo alone yet, because we do not know if he is perfectly safe for a little girl to ride."

"Why, Mamma, Virgil says he's just as gentle as Bruce, and I think he must be too; for when Virgil put me on his back this morning, Beppo walked off just like he was used to little girls riding him, and I wasn't a bit afraid."

Mrs. Grayson looked at Nellie with an amused smile as she quelled in herself an impulse to laugh at her artless tactics. But despite her effort to appear cheerful, the sad, melancholy air came back to her, and in some vague way Nellie had the feeling of being held in check. During the next few seconds many different expressions flitted over her face, and her mother watching her said:

"I am going to have some friends to dine with me to-day, and as I shall not have time to take Daisy's flowers to her this morning, suppose you get your brother to drive you out to see her for me—you go and ask him and I will see about dinner.

"Oh, I hope he will go, then we can drive Beppo!" said Nellie delightedly.

As Mrs. Grayson turned to leave the room, Nellie suddenly skipped through the doorway ahead of her mother, and the dog who, under a listless attitude had been covertly regarding her for the last few minutes, fled sportively after her in full chase.

CHAPTER III.

The departure of Mr. Leary and Carl had been delayed. The business which Mr. Leary had to transact involved more time than he thought, so it was quite three weeks until they were ready to leave for New York.

Meanwhile, Dr. Leslie had promptly written Mr. Bently (Mr. Arnold's solicitor), as to the time and place he and his sister would meet Mr. Glenwood and Ruth.

Mrs. Grayson had arranged to leave Nellie with her maiden sister, Miss Rachel Leslie, an elderly lady of a rather peculiar temperament, but withal, very friendly and kind-hearted.

Carl awoke early on the morning of his departure, and, while dressing, made many brave resolutions, for his mother's sake, to be calm and cheerful when the final hour of parting had arrived.

He took from an antlered rack a slender, silver-mounted riding-whip, the pretty gift of some lady friend, and crept noiselessly down-stairs in the gray twilight of the scarcely awakened household, to the stables. Saddling his horse, and mounting, he rode forth into the exhilarating sweetness of the morning air. He wanted to enjoy one more canter on Beppo, he said to himself, before he left, and to get more heart and nerve into himself.

He cast a swift glance at the quiet house, then turned and rode rapidly away toward the beautiful boulevards in the western part of the city.

After an hour's absence he returned strengthened and refreshed. The sun had risen, and as

it threw its mantle of gold over the stirring city the sullen shadows retreated.

Carl rode through a small gate opening into the yard on the right of the house and stopped, still sitting in the saddle while he looked over the familiar scene as if trying to impress its vivid outlines and every detail upon his memory. Never before had the beauty of the dear old place struck him so keenly as now when he was going to leave it. Even inanimate things became dearer; but when he saw Aunt Milly, his old nurse, come out of the house and walk slowly toward him, suddenly an anticipative homesickness came over him and a gathering mistiness blurred his view.

"Good morning, Aunt Milly—where is Virgil?" Carl greeted and questioned her in the same breath, struggling to speak in a level tone and to subdue the emotion which almost overcame him.

"He's at the stable, I b'leve. Mus' I call him?" She glanced round, but went on, "You don't know how sorry I 'm honey you're gwine away, an' I feard your ole nussy won't see you any mo'. Spects I'll be dead and gone long 'fore you come back—you ever come back again," said Aunt Milly with melancholy meekness, coming closer and resting her right hand, in her old confidential way, upon the pommel of the saddle.

"Oh, I hope not, Aunt Milly. I'm coming back again before a great while—and you know Europe is not so far away now as it used to be."

To Aunt Milly's incredulous stare Carl hastened to explain—"That is, people can go there and return in a much shorter time than they used to, they have better ships now and they

know better how to manage them, for they've got more knowledge about such things—that's what I mean. I'll not forget you while I'm away, Aunt Milly; and now that I've got the opportunity, I want to thank you for your faithfulness and all your kindness to mother, Nellie and me. I can't begin to tell you half how much I appreciate it, but I assure you I shall never forget it. I hope you and Virgil will remain here with Uncle Ralph, and that I shall find you both here on my return. I know he will always provide well for you, and not allow you to suffer or want for anything."

"Yes, I know that, chile', cause he's allus done it since I've been freed an' 'fore too. Ise been livin' with white folks so long till it 'pears I can't get used to livin' with no other—an' then you-all white chillun that I nuss'd seem jes' as near an' dear to me as my own chillun." Aunt Milly was full of all kinds of the best instincts, and she said this with great seriousness and the nearest approach to tears. She meant every word of it. Then she took her hand from the saddle and fumbled down for a corner of her ample apron.

Carl felt strongly moved to sympathy at the sight of Aunt Milly's grief, and to maintain his outward composure said huskily, as he made a gesture to move on, "I'll see you again, Aunt Milly, before I start. I want to see Virgil just now." He reached down and artfully slipped a gold double eagle into her dusky palm, and turned suddenly and rode to the stables where he found Virgil putting Beppo's feed into his trough. Dismounting, he talked with him a few minutes, patting the horses by way of a parting

caress, then walked rapidly toward the house; but not until he had done something to draw forth an eloquent soliloquy from Virgil as soon as he was out of ear-shot.

"Clever man, Mr. Carl is—nothing mean about him—generous as a prince, just like the doctor—believes in paying a fellow well for what he does." He slipped his hand down into his pocket, took out some silver and counted it.

"Phew! enough to get that evening dress suit down at Dallinger's & Co.—just like Mr. Carl's, though his may be something finer. Ugh! guess I'll be 'in the swim.'"

Breakfast was hurriedly dispatched that morning, and for once everyone seemed disposed to slight Aunt Milly's most temptingly prepared dishes, so the meal was barely more than a mere form.

The morning was bright, serene and beautiful, not a cloud in the sapphire sky so far aloof, and the pure, fresh air bore the perfume of the flowers and the song of the birds.

The metal crosses cresting the tall church spires emblazoned the golden radiance of the morning's sun, and outlined with vivid distinctness the graceful proportions of the handsome edifices.

So much Carl saw at the first quick glance as they drove through the busy thoroughfares of the city on their way to the R. & D. station; and then he tried to catch a last photographic glimpse of all the familiar places about him, and at the same time get consolation out of the hope that during his studious sojourn abroad the time would pass rapidly, and really would not seem so very long after all, before he should return to his dear native city.

He felt sure that he should never love any other place half so well. Then he fell into a reflective train of thought about it. Undoubtedly it was the coming city of his State, and as a citizen and a Southerner he felt proud of it. The growth and development of the place in the last decade had been marvellous, and certainly there was nothing to hinder its continued rapid progress.

There was more genuine public spirit, more unity of purpose, and more organization among the business men than were to be found in most Southern cities. These were the things that insured the growth of a community, and herein he felt sure had been much of the city's strength in the past. As he looked out upon the broad, busy streets, lined with handsome business houses and elegant private residences, he exulted to himself, not vain-gloriously, but with a sense of pardonable pride, that the city had indeed a prosperity that was unsurpassed and a future that was in the highest degree encouraging. Then, with an honest inspiration kindling his generous heart, he felt as if he should like to extend a hearty invitation to the thousands of homeseekers and capitalists of the North and West to come and cast their fortunes in such a progressive city, which, with its health-giving atmosphere charged with ozone, and its matchless, invigorating climate, was incomparably superior to any other place that he knew of. Yes, it was one of the brightest, breeziest, pluckiest cities in the State, he said to himself, and it cost him pangs of keenest misery to leave it even for the short space of two years.

Carl, like his Uncle Ralph, had much State as well as local pride. He knew that good people

were always welcome in his State, as well as in his town; and the inducements in the way of climate and soil throughout the length and breadth of the State could not be surpassed.

How infinitely happy the thousands of desirable immigrants—who were steered every year to the prairies of the far West, where they made investments of capital and labor, and could not get away—would be if living in a country so immensely rich in natural resources as his own native State with its beautiful soil—too much of it unproductive and uncleared simply because her resources had not been properly displayed to them. He hoped that North Carolina would make such a creditable exhibit of her existing conditions and future possibilities at the great World's Fair, that the thousands of sight-seers who went thither might get at least a faint conception of the wonderful treasures she held, and many of them be induced to come and see for themselves that she had combined advantages that no other State in the land could boast.

Arrived at the station, they found quite a coterie of their friends assembled to bid them good-bye. Mr. and Mrs. Leary and their daughter, Kate, were in the ladies' waiting-room—the latter a tall, graceful, pretty brunette, becomingly gowned in a silver-gray traveling suit of stylish cut and finish, and a jaunty gray hat to match. She stood near the open doorway, her face full of the glow of anticipation, talking in an animated way but with great ease and simplicity to Dr. Seaton, the handsome and popular young physician associated with Dr. Leslie in his practice.

She gave the Leslie party a smiling glance of recognition when they entered the waiting-room, and presently, after exchanging a few words

with some acquaintances standing near, she and Dr. Seaton crossed the room to Dr. Leslie, Carl and Mrs. Grayson, spoke very cordially to them, and included themselves in their party.

The railway journey, full of novelty and interest, as all such journeys generally are, was, however, a rather uneventful one. At Washington City, Cecil Brian joined them, meeting Carl with the cheery salutation, "Well! here we are; and I'm glad to see a familiar face!"

As he took the seat next to Carl, Miss Leary noted his easy, well-bred manner, and but for the unusual pallor which seemed never to leave his face, she would have thought him handsome. They were about as unlike as two men could be, in outward appearance, at least. Carl Grayson, with his laughing blue eyes—or were they gray?—fair hair, broad, high forehead, straight well-cut nose and firm-set, handsome mouth, showed him a man upon whom opportunities had been showered.

Cecil Brian, with his low, musical voice, tender, dreamy eyes, dark silky hair and nervously expressive mouth, was just the picture her fancy had already evoked of this artist friend, of whom she had frequently heard Carl speak so warmly. She believed he was a man who cared for nothing but the idol of his life—his Art! She was quite sure that she should not like him. But as she sat watching him, with true womanly perversity she found herself assuming a deeper interest in him, and it was while she was tacitly constructing episodes of interest in their coming sea-voyage, in which the artist was the central figure and played a conspicuous part, that they reached Jersey City, just as the twilight was filming the air.

Myriads of dazzling lights seemed to hang, like suspended stars, just out of reach, while they flung their broken glow over the circling, shadowy waters. In the midst of the turmoil and crowding and pushing to and fro, they crossed the ferry, took cabs and were driven directly to the St: Denis, that popular hotel far down town, where Dr. Leslie had arranged to meet the Glenwoods and Ruth—and, too, where they could avail themselves of certain delightful privileges to be found there, such as the traveler so much appreciates when absent from the familiar atmosphere of home.

In fact, Mrs. Grayson declared that she didn't believe she could ever feel half so much at home anywhere else in the city; and Miss Leary's enthusiastic greeting on first meeting her in the parlor, several hours after they had taken possession of their comfortable quarters, was simply an echo of Mrs. Grayson's unexpressed verdict: "Isn't the charm and coziness here delightfully homelike?"

Indeed, this peculiar charm of which Miss Leary spoke is one that a person recognizes at once wherever it exists, for it seems to pervade the very air one breathes and produces a sense of quiet content and restfulness.

Dr. Leslie ascertained soon after their arrival that the Glenwoods had not yet come, but the proprietor informed him that he had been notified to reserve rooms, and these he should hold subject to their order till he heard further from them.

The next day Dr. Leslie and Mrs. Grayson went to see Carl and the Leary party off on the Germanic.

CHAPTER IV.

When Dr. Leslie and Mrs. Grayson returned to the hotel, Mrs. Grayson went at once to her room. She felt that she must be alone, her heart ached so.

"I shall come for you at six o'clock to go to dinner, and I hope you will be feeling better by then," said her brother.

The dining-room was alive with bright faces and gay, subdued chatter when they entered, and from the table where the waiter had seated them they could observe persons coming and going, see many of the occupants about them, and at the same time note the beautiful and artistic effects of this changing panorama in the magnificent Colonial room.

The soft-footed waiters seemed to move to the musical tinkle of the bright crystal and china, and when the one who served them solicitously handed Mrs. Grayson a menu card and she had made out her order, her attention was attracted to a group of four persons—an elderly lady and gentleman and two girls, apparently about the same age, sitting at a table diagonally across from her, with several tables intervening.

The elderly couple had their backs to her, but the two girls who sat opposite them were facing her. From their dress and general bearing they were evidently people of culture and recognized distinction. As she observed them more closely, she started perceptibly, for some indefinable expression, vague at first, in the delicate, aristocratic face of the young girl with the lovely blue eyes and blonde hair was strangely familiar to

her, and she struggled with her memory to recall an earlier acquaintance, if it had existed. But like a shadowy reminiscence, struggling to take definite form, it evaded her, and at last wearied with the torturing effort to coerce memory to acknowledge the recognition, she tried to turn away from it, when suddenly like a flash—a revelation—it came to her wherein the familiarity was suggestive.

"Ralph," she said in a low tone, "I wonder who those people are at the table across from us? There is something in the features of the girl with fair hair and blue eyes that reminds me very much of Carl. Look; don't you think so?"

"Why, Helen, how absurd! It is simply because you are thinking of Carl that you fancy you see a likeness—that is all."

Dr. Leslie had lowered his voice in imitation of his sister, and followed the direction of her eyes as she glanced across the room. Presently his eyes came back to his plate, and he said with much earnestness:

"I believe you are right, Helen, there is unmistakably a resemblance." Then, after a moment's pause, he added, "Perhaps they are the people we are expecting to meet here—our cousins."

"Who, the Glenwoods?" asked Mrs. Grayson in surprise, raising her eyebrows.

"Yes, the Glenwoods," echoed Dr. Leslie, suddenly growing abstracted.

Mrs. Grayson shook her head. "I hardly think so."

"Well, we shall soon have an opportunity to find out," her brother returned. Then glancing

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at her plate, he asked: "Why don't you eat something? You are merely trifling with your food. I was in hopes when you came down you would enjoy your dinner, but you've scarcely done more than taste one or two dishes."

"It's no use, Ralph, I can't eat, so I'll not keep up a pretence of doing so," she said, pushing her plate away. There was a brief pause, then she added with a faint smile, "I'm glad to see that you can do justice to your dinner, even if I can't to mine."

Her eyes wandered across the room again to the girl with the clear, rose-tinted complexion, who fascinated her. She was indeed very pretty, and as she talked to the elderly lady confronting her—who seemed to listen very patiently—the lips wreathed in smiles and the bright eyes flashing, there was a gay grace and charm about her highly prepossessing, and Mrs. Grayson thought the resemblance to Carl became every moment more apparent.

Presently she turned to her brother: "Ralph, I am quite convinced now that these people are the Glenwoods; and the girl I think so much like Carl, is Agnes, their daughter. It must be," Mrs. Grayson said slowly and with deep emphasis.

"But where is the child—Ruth Arnold I mean?" asked Dr. Leslie curiously, at the same time helping himself to a dish whose delicious flavor was temptingly appetizing.

"Yes, where is she, sure enough?" she repeated with a puzzled look, and knitting her brows. The next moment her eyes widened involuntarily, and she said almost in a breathless whisper, "Unless—yes—I do believe it—that

the girl in black, with the sad, sweet face must be she. She is beautiful, too. We've been thinking of her all along as a mere child—simply our own supposition—and she is not at all." Mrs. Grayson spoke with earnest conviction, as though she had suddenly received a prophetic clue.

Dr. Leslie did not reply, but there was a puzzled look on his face as the truth began to dawn upon him, and yet it seemed almost impossible for him to believe that the fair, beautiful girl could be the little Ruth he had promised to befriend—the little Ruth he had to come to New York to meet. It seemed queer to him, too, that he was to act the part of guardian to that girl.

He looked across the room and covertly and keenly studied the fair, sweet face. She was very beautiful, as Mrs. Grayson had said.

The eyes were large and luminous and appealing; eyes that seemed to hold a mystery in their fathomless depths, and were calm almost to sadness even when she smiled—even "as the mist resembles the rain," and shaded by long sweeping lashes several shades darker than the careless curls of golden brown hair which waved upon her high, broad forehead. The tremulous mouth was exquisite, and when she smiled there was a pathetic sadness about the rosy lips that enhanced their charm. The throat and neck were of milky whiteness, and their perfect poise as graceful as the swan's.

While he was observing her the group arose from the table, and the elderly couple followed by the two girls moved toward the elevator in the hall. Dr. Leslie continued to regard the little figure in black, for he was quite satisfied now

that the girl was Ruth, his ward, as he had recognized the elderly gentleman and lady as Mr. and Mrs. Glenwood when they got up from the table, though both were greatly changed.

He observed, too, that the girl was of medium height and very graceful, the black dress fitting to perfection every curve and line of her willowy figure, which was of faultless symmetry. He wondered no longer why her father spoke of her as "Little Ruth." There was a daintiness and charm about her which suggested the diminutive phrase.

"Of course we must send up our cards at once," said Mrs. Grayson, as she and her brother moved away from the table. "Ella Glenwood is so changed I scarcely recognized her, and George, too, looks much older than I expected to see him."

"Certainly he looks older than when you saw him last. You must recollect it has been some years since we left them in California," he said, smiling indulgently.

They had reached the elevator and stood waiting for it to descend. "Wait here a moment please, Helen," said Dr. Leslie, and he turned suddenly away and she lost sight of him in the circling crowd. In a few minutes he came back, smiling. "I've been to the office to look at the register and to make sure of our conjectures about the girl dressed in black. She is Ruth Arnold!"

"Why, didn't I tell you so?" asked Mrs. Grayson with a touch of gentle reproach in her tone.

"That's very true," he responded calmly, "but in this instance I thought it was best to make assurance doubly sure."

"Yes, I suppose so," she assented absently.

They had entered the elevator and were swiftly approaching the floor upon which their apartments were located. Before getting out, Dr. Leslie handed the elevator boy two cards, and instructed him what to do with them.

Half way down the corridor to their rooms, Dr. Leslie chanced to meet an old acquaintance; and loitering a few minutes to talk with him, finally joined his sister, who had passed on and waited for him, and he walked with her to her room.

While waiting for an answer to their cards, Mrs. Grayson filled up the interval making some trifling changes in her toilet, and presently a knock at her door made her start and turn. It was her brother, however, who occupied the room adjoining her own.

"Helen, the messenger boy brought this to my room, but it is for you," he said, handing her a card.

"Thank you." She took the bit of square card-board, upon which was penciled in a nervous, effeminate hand these lines, which she read aloud: "Dear Helen: We shall be pleased to meet you both in the hotel parlor, where we await your coming. Truly your cousin, Ella Glenwood."

Mrs. Grayson was silent a moment, absently scanning the card.

"Well?" Dr. Leslie asked.

"Of course we'll go down at once. It seems almost like meeting total strangers; it has been so long since we parted with them," said Mrs. Grayson. She picked up her fan from the table, gave a hurried glance at the mirror, then turned

and accompanied him, feeling somewhat nervous as they descended to the parlor.

Mrs. Glenwood, a tall, stately-looking woman, with black hair and eyes and a rather dull complexion, was sitting on a divan reading, apart from Mr. Glenwood and the girls; she arose at their entrance, gave them a glance of searching scrutiny, then took off her glasses and came rustling forward to meet them with that conscious air of possession characteristic of irreproachable ancestry.

The habitual haughty expression on the face of the proud, ambitious woman softened, and her polished reserve relaxed into something like cordiality as she greeted them.

"Ah! this is indeed a pleasure," she said, extending her hand, and kissing Mrs. Grayson, who returned her kiss and embrace; and then she gave a friendly hand to Dr. Leslie, who bowed gracefully over it. "You are so little altered, Cousin Ralph, since we last met," she went on, looking steadily at him, "I believe I should have recognized you almost anywhere without a previous knowledge of your presence. Time has indeed been lenient with you."

He inclined his head, smiling, in recognition of this civil observation.

"When did you arrive in New York?" she asked, transferring her glance from one to the other, as she toyed with her glasses.

"Tuesday evening, and we expected to have found you here," said Dr. Leslie.

Her reply was prevented by Mr. Glenwood and the young ladies coming forward at that moment, and when the former had exchanged very hearty greetings with Mrs. Grayson and

Dr. Leslie, Mrs. Glenwood turned to the girls, who stood waiting to be presented. She looked suggestively toward Ruth, and with a gentle wave of her hand she said, turning to Dr. Leslie:

"This is Miss Arnold, your ward, Dr. Leslie; and I assure you it gives me very much pleasure to confide so dear a charge to your guardianship; and this is Mrs. Grayson," she added, presenting Ruth to her in turn.

Dr. Leslie stepped forward and with chivalric grace and courtesy took the timidly outstretched hand, clasping it warmly in his own.

Then Mrs. Grayson, with an air of motherly dignity, approached and kissed her very tenderly on either cheek, warmly pressed her hand, and uttered in a low, sweet voice the kindest of greetings and welcome.

There was a conscious feeling of relief to everyone present when this introduction was over; but Mrs. Glenwood was too thoroughly skilled in the strict conventionalities of polite society, and possessed too much tact, not to be able to prevent an awkward pause or an awkward speech after this embarrassing interview had ended. Laying her jewelled hand on Agnes' arm, she gently pressed her forward.

"Let me present to you our daughter Agnes." In the prettiest and most becoming of summer traveling toilets, garnished with a small cluster of cream roses which she had fastened in her belt, and the bright flush and changing light coming and going over her pretty face, she advanced gracefully first to Mrs. Grayson, and in a manner characteristic of herself, embraced her with effusion, adding as she still clasped her hand, "I've heard mamma speak of you so

often, Cousin Helen, that I've never regarded you as a stranger, so I cannot meet you as one now."

"Thank you, Agnes," responded Mrs. Grayson, who had returned her caresses as warmly as they had been given. "It is very pleasant, I assure you, to be so kindly remembered. Your mother and I were classmates when we were not quite so old as you are now, and I often recur to those happy days with a great deal of pleasure."

To her cousin Ralph Agnes gave a different welcome, though none the less frank and cordial. Dr. Leslie met her very graciously, paying her some gallant, graceful compliment which sent the crimson tide surging in her lovely face. By his impulse they had moved to a group of chairs in a corner of the room, and now seated themselves.

Ruth sat beside Mrs. Grayson, apparently listening to the conversation, but inwardly feeling no inclination to join in or even contribute to it. At times she stole furtive glances at her guardian as he conversed with Mrs. Glenwood, making various and minute inquiries concerning his old friends in California. She saw that he was handsome in face and figure, and while he was not young, yet he certainly was not elderly.

She had expected to see a much older man, with gray hair, perhaps, and at least a suggestion of wrinkles, and she was surprised when she saw neither. Presently, during a brief lapse in the conversation, he turned and looked at her as if conscious of her covert glances.

Before he spoke, he wavered a moment whether to address her conventionally by her surname, or more familiarly as "Miss Ruth."

Evidently he thought better of the latter formula, for when he presently turned to her and asked:

"Miss Ruth, have you ever visited the South?" it sounded easy and natural, and she returned with unconsious grace the answer:

"Oh, yes; but it was when I was quite a little girl. I spent one winter in St. Augustine, Florida, with papa and mamma, but I do not recollect very much about the place or the people. I do remember, however, that it was a very quaint old town; but its antiquity was respectable and dignified even in its fading glory, and its picturesque situation and surroundings, its unique history and achievements, as also its pure air and water, had a peculiar charm for me. That is about the extent of my personal knowledge and recollection of the South."

The sweet voice was a little unsteady when she alluded to her parents, and it grew more soft and reverential as she went on:

"Papa always spoke with such fond admiration of North Carolina that I am quite prepared to love his native State very much for his sake, if for no other reason."

"Cousin Ralph, I think you'll find in Ruth an easy proselyte, and I dare say in less than six months after she's been in North Carolina she'll be as disloyal to California as though she had never lived there," laughed Agnes, affecting a look of rebuke at Ruth and playfully tapping her on the hand with her fan.

"Oh, no, I don't think so," returned Dr. Leslie quietly. "In the first place, no influence will be brought to bear upon her to test her loyalty in that direction; and in the second place, I think that State pride as well as the love of

birthplace is so deeply implanted in every true breast that no transplanting to an alien soil or atmosphere, however favoring the conditions, can ever uproot that virgin affection for them which clusters so closely about the human heart. A person often, and rightly, too, forms a very strong and deep attachment for the State of his adoption; but it is a sort of stepmother affection, so to speak, and can never supersede, in my opinion, that genuine mother love that is born within him—that love which causes his heart to swell with pride and his pulse to thrill with joy whenever her praises are sounded; and, when abroad and asked by strangers from whence he came, he feels an honest pride in acknowledging the place of his birth and in presenting his State as a model for the imitation of others."

"True, very true, indeed," interposed Mr. Glenwood warmly. "While you were talking, those lines of the satirist, happily illustrating one's disloyalty to his own State and country, occurred to me. I read them when a schoolboy, and I recollect how forcibly they struck me then. How do they run?" Mr. Glenwood touched his fingers meditatively to his forehead. "Ah, yes, something like this:

> "'The steady patriots of the world alone,
> The friends of every country but their own.'

"Now, I will admit," he continued, "while I love California and think she is a grand and magnificent country, yet deep down in my heart I believe I love the Old North State better."

"Oh, of course you do," returned Dr. Leslie,

with a beaming smile; "and as a North Carolinian I am pleased to hear you say so. Now, my experience and observation have been," he went on, "that as association expands the scope of affection, this feeling extends to the social systems around us, and is gradually enlarged until it comprises within its devotion the entire government of the country we inhabit. As one of my distinguished countrymen has truthfully said, 'No Government has ever retained the allegiance of its citizens where this sentiment has languished, and no country has flourished where it was not taught as a principle, cherished as a passion, and made subordinate only to religion, in the ardor with which it glowed in the bosom of the people.'"

"How about your schools and State debt?" Mr. Glenwood asked, after a little pause; "and how has the population grown, or increased from immigration?"

"Well, since the rescue of the State from the tempest of profligacy that swept over it after the war, taxes have steadily diminished, and the schools have increased until they offer education to every child in the Commonwealth, regardless of color. With regard to debt, there is less State and individual debt than at any time in the last century.

"The State's legitimate debt is steadily reduced, her treasury has a large surplus, her humane institutions, conducted with equal care and outlay for both races, are monuments of credit; her public improvements have kept pace with the growing wants of her people; her authority reflects the pride of the State in its stainless integrity, and thrift and content are the common

blessings of her people. As to immigration, North Carolina has fewer foreigners and a more completely homogeneous population than any other State in the Union.

"In fact, she is now singular from the other reconstructed States in having attained, solely by the efforts of her own people, a higher degree of general prosperity than she ever before attained in her history; and to-day, has a more prosperous and thrifty people than at any period of the past. But we are glad to have good, substantial people come among us, and we cheerfully extend to them the hand of fellowship. We can offer them many splendid inducements."

Mr. Glenwood laughed and rubbed his hands together. "That's right; offer your inducements, and they'll come. 'Change' is the word. It seems that in this day and time the majority seem to believe that change is the touchstone to success. Why this spirit of restlessness, I do not know, unless it is that people like to go out into the world, if for no other reason than to enjoy the surprises of antipodal existence. They seem eager for the rigors of chance and change, and sometimes make a move, I suppose for the fun of the thing. In this era of large things we live an age in a day. Such a thing as well-ordered leisure and permanency of residence are practically unknown, except in very rare instances.

"It is a mad whirl, but it is the century—the Nineteenth Century—and we must live in it and master it if we are to move on at all. True, the wear and tear are frightful, but it seems inevitable."

In the pause that followed, Agnes turned and

said something to Ruth in a low tone, but Dr. Leslie caught the sound of his own name, and bowing to her asked laughingly:

"What is it, Agnes?"

"Oh, I merely remarked to Ruth," she said laughing, "that I verily believe that you consider it your particular duty to make yourself as agreeable as possible to a North Carolinian whenever you meet one, as a part of the debt you owe the State."

There was a general laugh, in which Dr. Leslie joined and seemed to enjoy more than the others, and while he was talking to Agnes, Mrs. Glenwood, fearing that the conversation would presently drift back to the discussion of the same old topic, or possibly into a lively review of labor and social problems, which themselves, however popular, were extremely tiresome to her, now tactfully changed the conversation.

Just then an occasion was furnished for doing so. It was very close and warm, but she had neglected to bring her fan with her when she came down from her room after dinner. Mrs. Grayson generously offered her cousin the use of her own.

"Thanks; but don't let me deprive you, Helen;" and on Mrs. Grayson's protesting that she did not, Mrs. Glenwood turned to Agnes:

"Ah, this reminds me, my dear," looking at the fan, "that I must look in at Denning's before we leave the city to-morrow and get the fan you wanted to match one of your evening silks. Don't let me forget it. Do you know which shade it is?"

Agnes looked down, and for a moment vigorously tugged at something in her belt.

"There! Just as near the shade of this exquisite beauty as you can match it," she said airily, holding up a large, half-blown creamy rose, tinted with the bare suggestion of pink; and then she leaned forward and made a motion of fastening it on the bosom of her cousin Helen's dress.

"No, no, dear," quickly objected Mrs. Grayson, as she put up her hand to arrest Agnes' purpose. "I never wear flowers—that is, such a showy one as this. Sometimes I wear a little bunch of pansies or daisies. You keep it, dear. There is no ornament half so pretty for young girls as flowers, I think."

Agnes took the rose away with a laugh of affected reluctance. "Well, you may have it any way, Cousin Helen," she persisted, laying it in her lap.

"Thank you," Mrs. Grayson said, smiling. She picked up the rose and continued to Mrs. Glenwood, "I should think it would be very difficult to match these delicately blended tints, and I hardly think you will be able to do it. However, it may be—"she broke off suddenly and looked up inquiringly.

The gentlemen had risen from their seats and stood before them, and Dr. Leslie was saying to Mr. Glenwood in answer to his query;

"Yes, we leave for the South quite early in the morning."

"And I feel strongly tempted, Cousin Ralph, to forego the pleasure of my summer outing to Lennox and Newport, and go South with you," Agnes interposed archly, brilliantly smiling. She turned to Ruth. "It will be so hard to give you up, darling," in recognition of their early

separation, "and I can't tell you how much I shall miss you."

The girls rose involuntarily, and then Mrs. Glenwood and Mrs. Grayson, the former adjusting her glasses.

Thereupon Dr. Leslie and Mrs. Grayson put in a hospitable entreaty for Agnes to accompany them South, at the same time including Mr. and Mrs. Glenwood, and politely urging the acceptance of the invitation. After declining with regret and thanks, Mr. Glenwood said:

"In all probability we shall not return home before September; but before we do, I hope we shall have the pleasure of seeing you at your home in North Carolina. Nothing would give me more pleasure than to visit my old home place and former friends—or those who are still living in your city."

"Not more pleased than we shall be to have you come, and your friends to see you, I assure you," Mrs. Grayson said as she shook him warmly by the hand. "I say good-bye, now," she added, "for fear I shall not see you again before we leave. We make an early start, and Ruth—" Mrs. Grayson paused as she turned to her—it was the first time she had addressed her by her Christian name, "you, too, would better bid Mr. Glenwood good-bye now."

When the adieux were over, and the gentlemen had left the room, Mrs. Glenwood and Mrs. Grayson resumed their seats and began discussing various topics of interest—especially to Mrs. Glenwood.

Agnes and Ruth moved to the window, Agnes doing most of the talking and Ruth listening, while her dreamy eyes followed the hundreds of

pedestrians trooping up and down Broadway, though her thoughts were not upon them. More than once she turned and glanced at Mrs. Glenwood and Mrs. Grayson, as though mentally comparing the two women.

Mrs. Glenwood, consummate woman of the world as she was, and inordinately sensible of her own importance, was so engrossed with her social duties and the frivolous pleasures of the world, as to leave her small leisure for little else besides her particular sphere. Cold by nature, self-contained and ambitious, there was a chilliness about her that made her repellant rather than attractive; and even her well-trained, low, modulated voice and laugh had an unpleasant, metallic ring, and when she was irritated, cut like a stiletto and jarred painfully upon the nerves. There was never any heart-warmth in it. Hating poverty and its concomitant sacrifices, she had married rich—enormously rich—and now unstintedly indulged herself in all the pleasures and luxuries that her husband's money could purchase. Her ambition was not to equal, but to excel others in making a display with her riches. Still, cold and proud and haughty as she was, there was one human being that Mrs. Glenwood devotedly loved—one object that tendered her heart, and kept up a fountain of warmth in her frigid nature—and that object was Agnes, her only child.

Mrs. Grayson wondered that the girl's head was not turned; wondered that she, too, was not selfish, disdainful, cold and proud. But as yet she was unspoiled by the frivolities of the world, and was sincere, kind and true.

CHAPTER V.

The old Moravian town, Salem, in North Carolina, early became famous not only as a center of missionary work, but as a seat of learning; and the early history, traditions and heroical memories of her brave and peace-loving people who wrought and suffered amidst the struggles, privations and hardships which encompassed them, and their brave endurance, are often recounted, and are invested with a peculiar interest and pathos that the recital of the story never diminishes nor lessens its fascinating charm.

In those days of early history she was "a world in epitome, a civilization in little, an upward development of a single co-operative family," who had wrested from almost barbaric wastes the best treasures which make for peace, plenty and prosperity.

But, in later years, when geographically linked to a younger city, and the very names became hyphened together, she bravely clung to her individual existence—when it seemed that an effort was being made to cover her identity—and disputed inch by inch the levelling of her ancient landmarks; and while no longer, perhaps, the unique town described by the observers of the past, still under her modernized and brightened appearance she preserves certain of her first characteristics which time nor chance has yet effaced; and, notwithstanding the inevitable changes and revolutions in manners and customs which from time to time have taken place, her admirers cling to the hope, even as the gradual evolution goes on, that the old historic town

may ever retain her personality, never break with the traditions of her past, and always preserve a remnant, at least, of the splendors once all her own.

Rejuvenated and supported on one side by her active, bustling, hard-working sister city, Winston, where handsome fortunes are made by her energetic citizens, and which frequently fraternizes with her in the most amicable manner without taking from her her individuality, she is just as cultured, modest, frank and hospitable to-day as she has ever been in the past, knowing how to attract to herself the best elements of her neighbors, and give to them her own in exchange; and though her number of inhabitants be not so large, still she is great by reason of her intellectual force and moral value.

It was here in this quaint old town that Miss Rachel Leslie claimed the distinction of residence, preferring the sweet seclusion and conservatism of the old Moravian town to the bustling activity and cosmopolitanism of the "new town," so called. Miss Rachel's home was just the spot for a person of her modest tastes and retiring nature.

The warm day was near its close by the time Miss Rachel was through with the momentous task of overhauling and setting the Leslie house in order, and looking after the various details of domestic duties which Mrs. Grayson had asked her to attend to on the day she left for New York.

As she stood locking the front door, Nellie and Bruce romped noisily up and down the long veranda, enjoying themselves immensely, and paying no heed whatever to Miss Rachel's oft

repeated command to keep quiet or go out on the lawn to play.

"Well, I'm through at last, and I believe the sun will be down before I get home," said Miss Rachel to herself, wrenching the key out of the lock and dropping it into the black silk hand-bag which she carried upon her arm.

They took their way through the various streets, turning first into one and then another; the evening breeze rose, stirred the leaves, and bathed the city in a delicious freshness. Along the horizon where the sun was westering, slow-moving clouds in purple and palest green blended together, then crinkled into a broad banner which lay for a moment outspread against a luminous background of crimson and gold.

As they passed along the Court House Square, a row of jolly, careless negro boys, picturesque in their raggedness, was perched upon the terraced parapet, whistling a merry factory song while they beat time to the tune with their bare brown legs dangling against the high brick wall. Nellie lingered a moment to listen, laughed good-naturedly at the queer antics of the little darkies, then ran forward to overtake her aunt, who had stopped abruptly in front of the First National Bank, and stood peering from right to left. Then she turned and rapidly retraced her steps a quarter of a square, waving little Nellie back with a motion of her hand when she made a motion to follow her. Nellie was not over-burdened with shyness, so she stood on the pavement and watched the people as they drove past or walked hurriedly by, peeped delightedly into the handsome show-window at the big bisque dolls spinning frantically around on some

ingenious contrivance arranged to display the fancy notions which the store contained; and at length glanced up admiringly at the beautiful and richly carven front of the building. She was so absorbed in her curious inspection that she failed to hear Miss Rachel's soft tread, and not until she had touched her on the shoulder and called her by name was she aware of her aunt's presence. Nellie gave one more imploring look at the whirling dolls as she turned and followed her aunt, who now quickened her pace till they reached Main Street, a thoroughfare which was alive with the turmoil and life of the busy, urgent city.

Here, Miss Rachel glanced toward the west. The sunset was slowly paling, and the lengthened shadows of the houses on the pavement were fast disappearing. Although it was not yet dark, here and there an electric jet flared up in some of the pretty stores which lined the streets.

As they walked down the broad sidewalk, bordered on one side by tall elms, Nellie continued to ask all sorts of questions about the people they met and some of the old buildings they passed—for they had now crossed First Street and were in the old Moravian town—and listened attentively while Miss Rachel answered her inquiries.

Even a stranger readily noted the change immediately from one town to the other, for the variety and architecture of the residences and other buildings were different here, and there seemed to be something, too, in the quiet and serenity of the very atmosphere different from the noisy city they had left behind.

Occasionally Miss Rachel would let her eyes wander up and down the fronts of the houses they passed, for Nellie's artless questioning had awakened a long train of thought with many strong yearnings, and carried her dimly back with the things and the people of the past. "How curiously our lives are linked together," she presently said, half aloud.

"What did you say, Aunt Rachel?" Nellie asked, looking up at her with curious eyes.

"Oh, nothing, child; I was only thinking," Miss Rachel answered. But there was an unconscious grievous pain expressed in her voice, and she smiled faintly.

On every side the light, graceful draperies of vines which were so general, and the numerous flower boxes, little balconies and windows filled with pots and stone vases of flowering plants, made the most commonplace house look charming. The tall white marguerites, pink and white geraniums, masses of blue-eyed lobelias, dwarf nasturtiums, and other well-known flowers, filled and overran their receptacles, while the maderia amongst gleaming leaves showed a constant cascade of bloom, and managed to keep in a perpetually decorative condition the soft green fringes of creepers swaying gently in the breeze and adding fresh beauty to the blossoms. It seemed that all the available space for flowers had been utilized, with the result that it gave to the city a cool and sylvan appearance, and made a beautiful picture of ease and comfort.

Presently Nellie and Bruce darted on in front, turning here and there, showing perfect famili-

arity with their surroundings, and Nellie's face was radiant with excitement.

When she had reached the entrance to a narrow street off from the main thoroughfare, she stood waiting for her aunt.

Her hat was pushed back from her flushed face, and a tress of her golden hair had escaped from the ribbon which confined it, and curled caressingly round her white throat. Just before her aunt reached her, she turned and suddenly called out a gay good-bye to her and then ran hastily after Bruce towards the house.

The old-fashioned residence was a wooden structure and stood on a little side street, a short distance back from the Main Street which ran straight as an arrow-line through the two towns, and was traversed its full length by the electric railway.

The house was a pretty picture with its low gabled roof, up and over which the roses clambered, flaunting their crimson banners from the very chimney-tops, and its small shuttered windows with their snowy draperies. A small gabled porch jutted out over the front door, and around the latticed pillars ivy and wisteria twined themselves lovingly together and gently crept up the gray sides of the old house. The clean-swept, graveled walk leading to the gate was thickly fringed with purple sweet-scented violets, and over the picket fence enclosing the yard, near the little front gate, an English honeysuckle flung its wealth of foliage and fragrance, amongst which the busy bees buzzed drowsily. The mock orange and spirea bushes disposed about the yard, and which had whitened in their springtide flowerage, had loosened their pearly

petals and the frolicsome winds had sent them careering far and wide. On the left of the house stood a tall elm—paralytic on one side—which threw a wide circumference of shade, leaving the rest of the greensward sunbathed on a sunny day. In the rear was the vegetable and flower garden, which was Miss Rachel's special delight. It was a perfect conservatory of fruits and vegetables for service, and flowers for sacrifice. Roses, primroses and violets were her favorites, and there were others, old-fashioned garden flowers which she cherished like old friends; flowers around which clung delightful memories and rich with the associations of by-gone days.

When Miss Rachel reached the house she found Nellie sitting on the door-step, her head thrown back against one of the vine-wreathed pillars, looking very warm and tired, and fanning herself with her large straw hat. Hearing her aunt's slow, soft step, she looked up wearily.

"Oh, Aunt Rachel, I'm too tired for anything, and I believe I was almost asleep," said Nellie, yawning, and struggling to her feet. She spoke lightly, but her aunt looked at her attentively, without appearing to study her face. She was very pale now and there was a peculiar tone in her voice, which betrayed great weariness.

"You've been runinng too much, and the warm weather is very trying. Come in, and as soon as you get rested, Mary will give you some supper, and then you must go straight to bed."

Miss Rachel led her into her pretty, homelike room, that had a peculiarly restful feeling, and seated her in a great, easy chair, beside an open window.

"Now, you sit here, child, and I'll go and tell Mary to bring your supper right away. No need for your going to the dining-room if you are so tired."

As Miss Rachel reached the door she stopped and looked back, and something in the attitude of the child—perhaps it was her perfect helplessness—strangely touched her. She hesitated a moment, with a look of perplexity on her face, and stood silently regarding her, then turned and passed noiselessly out of the room. Left alone in the soft, dreamy twilight, from sheer weariness, Nellie soon fell fast asleep.

"Poor little thing!" said Miss Rachel, a few minutes later, when she returned with Mary, bearing Nellie's supper on a small tin tray. "It has been a long day for her, and she seems thoroughly worn-out. I'm sorry now I didn't let her ride down on the car; the walk was too much for her. Take the tray back to the dining-room, Mary; then come and help me get her to bed."

The evening was warm, deliciously fragrant with night-scented stocks, and through the open window the rays of a young moon, cradled in the tree-tops, glanced in a sidelong, shy sort of way over the quiet little figure and made her look like a vision—a part of the brightness, as she calmly slept in the mystical moonlight.

The clock in the neighboring church tower struck three-quarters past eight. Miss Rachel felt a curious irritation at the slow solemn strokes of the old clock, which it had never made her feel before; and while the expression of annoyance was still upon her face, Mary came back into the room and began to prepare Nellie for bed.

Miss Rachel and Mary talked together in low, repressed voices, so as not to awaken her, but Nellie presently roused up and gazed from one to the other with a bewildered, perplexed look, then closed her eyes and made a feeble effort to shake off Mary's hand.

"Nellie, Nellie," her aunt called, in a kind tone, gently pulling her by the shoulder. "Let Mary undress you, child, and put you to bed." Then, with tender solicitude, Miss Rachel began to assist Mary disrobe the little sleeper.

"Yes—Mamma—I kiss you—Mamma, I say my prayers—I am so"—she broke off the incoherent speech, and like one in a dream, she got suddenly upon her feet and knelt down, leaning against Miss Rachel's knee, and repeated to the end her little evening prayer—"Now I lay me down to sleep."

After she had whispered the "Amen," she still knelt, while her breathing came soft and regular, for she was fast asleep, her head resting in her clasped hands upon Miss Rachel's lap.

Mary stooped and raised the little white-robed figure very tenderly in her strong arms, and put her upon the small, low bed, which her aunt had prepared for her beside her own.

Being of an eminently practical turn of mind herself, Miss Rachel was an early riser: and the next morning when she rose she tiptoed about the room, dressing as noiselessly as possible, so as not to awaken Nellie, and before she withdrew, she closed the shutters and drew the curtains, darkening the room to a sombre twilight, then stepped softly out into the hall.

But just as she had closed the door behind her, Robbie, her canary, caught a glimpse of her in

passing, and suddenly burst into a ripple of melody, which resounded startingly loud throughout the quiet house. In her anxiety for Nellie's comfort, she quickly crossed to where the cage hung, amongst the dewy vines on the porch, tapped lightly on the wire frame, and called caressingly up, "Robbie! Robbie!" hoping to check his exultant trill; but the bird seemed over-burdened with song this morning, and responded to Miss Rachel's gentle reproof with a fresh outburst of rapturous melody even louder and more joyous than before.

"Ah, you naughty fellow!" scolded Miss Rachel, shaking her head and cooing back as she left him.

At that moment she heard Nellie's voice, and as she opened the door Nellie started up with a glad exclamation of delight, sprang out of bed, apparently entirely recovered from the effects of her over fatigue the day before, and her little face was aglow with happiness and animation.

"Oh, Aunt Rachel, I heard the fairies singing in the rose-vines! Do please help me dress real quick, so I can get out to see them. I've always so wanted to see some real live fairies, and I think there must be lots of them out there." Nellie was all in a nervous flutter.

Her aunt laughed. "Why, Nellie, that was Robbie you heard. He has been in a perfect glee for the last half hour, and I've been scolding him, and trying to make him hush, so you could sleep. I never saw him in such a merry mood as he is this morning."

"O—h!" gasped Nellie, in a slow, low-toned voice of disappointment, and the next moment she was very grave. Then after a little pause,

she added, "Well, I dreamt about the fairies anyway; and I guess I heard them, too."

"That may be," said her aunt, carefully brushing out the long tangled curls; "but I scarcely think you'll find any fairies in the rose-vines, unless butterflies and humming-birds are fairies."

"Why, they are not fairies!" quickly responded Nellie, in a tone of scornful derision. "Don't you believe in fairies, Aunt Rachel?" She presently asked: "Were'nt there any in your young days."

"Of course not, and there are none now." Nellie's face fell; but she soon recovered her happy light-heartedness, told her aunt her dream about the sure-enough fairies that she knew nothing about; and as soon as she had finished dressing ran out on the porch, threw cooing kisses up at Robbie, and with a clap of her little hands and a sudden "Scat!" sent Tom, her aunt's big gray cat, that sat washing his face with his cushioned paws, scampering through the vines; raced twice around the house with Bruce, and finally slipped away from him into the dining-room, quite insolvent in the matter of breath, where she found Mary, the bright-cheeked maid of all-work, dusting the furniture as a preliminary to setting the breakfast table.

Breakfast over, Nellie was on the lookout for some way to amuse herself, so she asked her aunt if she might take Bruce and go on the avenue—not far away—for a walk.

Nellie remembered the avenue as a most delightful rendezvous, with nurses and children on pleasant days, and where throngs of people, both old and young, resorted generally on Sabbath afternoons to enjoy the beautiful walk, and get

a breath of fresh air if the day were uncomfortably warm; for here the atmosphere seemed always clear and cool, and then the delicious sanctuary quiet of the place was soothing and restful even to the most tired and jaded spirit.

Indeed, this lovely avenue looks like a stray bit from some old Cathedral town, with its long sweep of exquisite verdure and undulating white sanded walk, bordered on either side by venerable cedars, whose plumy foliage seems shadowy with solemn thoughts, as the wind-rocked boughs give out gentle murmurs and low, tremulous sighs.

Here Nellie played and romped for hours with the neighbors' children, attended by her faithful dog; and she was unfeignedly happy, while she forgot how time was passing. Just as she reached home the dinner-bell was ringing, and she found her aunt in the dining-room, waiting her return.

After she was dressed and they had dined, she went into the garden, picked some flowers and made a wreath; when this amusement ceased to divert her, she played with her dolls; but soon got tired of them, and flung them aside, and at length fell asleep on the linen-covered lounge, in Miss Rachel's neat little sitting-room. When Mary woke her at half past four o'clock, to go for a promised walk, she bounced up quickly, as bright and fresh as though she had never known a tired moment in her life.

"Oh, I am so glad you've come at last!" she said, delightedly. "I'm all ready—all but my hat; just let me get it." She ran out in the hall for it, and Mary, having her's on already, followed her.

It was a lovely afternoon and the air was per-

vaded by the fragrance of the flowers in the yard and garden. They sauntered out, straight on to Main Street, turning down this thoroughfare, on which Miss Sallie Bergen lived, the lady Mary had promised her they would visit.

Nellie walked on silently for awhile, listening to the gentle rustle and murmur of the leaves of the beautiful old elms which shaded the side-pavement, enjoying with perfect content the infinite beauty and sweetness of nature, which seemed to tone her spirit in unison with its own, and giving herelf up to the enjoyment of it unreservedly.

"Do you think Miss Sallie will let us see her birds?" Nellie asked, dubiously, when they were quite near that lady's house, which they could now see from where they were.

"Oh, certainly; I know Miss Sallie very well; and she's just as kind-hearted as she can be. A good many people go to see her birds, because they are so pretty and rare, and no one else here has any like them."

"Where did she get them?"

"Oh, from almost everywhere," Mary answered, laconically, trying hard to remember some of the places that Miss Sallie had told her. "But she'll tell you anything you want to know about them," she added; "but don't ask too many questions."

The door was opened by a pleasant and attractive-looking lady of medium height, with brownish, silvered hair, and blue-gray eyes, given to glow with kindly feeling and sympathy, which made them at once very winning in expression. The mouth showed decision of character and an energetic temperament.

"We've come to see your pretty birds, Miss Sallie," Nellie began, with her usual impetuosity, as soon as she and Mary had greeted her; "and I do hope you will let us," she added, as if she doubted that she would.

"Oh, certainly you may see them. Come right in here," Miss Sallie said, kindly, turning to the left of the hall and entering a large and pleasant room with a bay-window filled with trailing vines and plants, amongst which hung several wire cages. "Here are my pets, Nellie," Miss Sallie said; "and come closer, so you can see them all."

"Oh, they are just beautiful," Nellie said, clapping her hands, "and I never saw any like them before, except the canaries and mocking-birds and parrots. Yes, I've seen paroquets before. And, oh, there's a pure white bird, Mary! I reckon he is a new-fashioned snow-bird."

"No, that is the white Java sparrow," Miss Sallie said, smiling; "and this is a gray Java sparrow."

She pointed out the different birds to Nellie, and told her their names, while the little fellows hopped about from perch to perch and kept up a continual chirping and twittering.

"This is a chaffinch," she said, touching the bird on the wing, "and this the purple finch; and this one here in the corner is the indigo finch. There are two other finches, but I don't see them. Oh, here they are—the rainbow finch and orange-cheek finch—pretty, aren't they?" looking around at Nellie. Then she tapped the large cage.

"I want to show you the gray linnet, and he belongs to the finch family too. This is he, and the bird on his left is a red-head."

"What is the name of that sweet little bird with a cap on his head?" Nellie asked enthusiastically, pointing to the bird indicated.

"The hooded Nun," answered Miss Sallie, "and this one is the Napoleon weaver."

"I should think they are lots of trouble," said Mary. "I don't think I could have the patience to work with them."

"Yes, they require a good deal of attention; but I think the pleasure they give me and my friends amply repays me for the trouble I have with them." Then turning to Nellie, "I think you've enjoyed seeing my birds, haven't you, Nellie?"

"Oh, yes, Miss Sallie; I certainly have; and I thank you so much for letting me see them and telling me their names. May I come again real soon and look at them—when you are not busy, you know? I can see them in the window outside, but not half so well as I can in here."

"Yes, certainly; come as often as you like, and your aunt will allow you. I'm glad they have given you so much pleasure." Just then the town clock began to strike, and Mary counted aloud the six clear, resonant strokes.

"Dear me, six o'clock!" she said; "I didn't know it was so late as that. How the time slipped away! Nellie, we must be going. Miss Rachel told me to get back by half past six, anyway. You won't have time to hear the parrot talk any this time. You can come again, you know." Whereupon poll parrot, who had a cage all to herself, seeing them making ready to start, began, "Good-bye!" and kept up her parting salutation until they were out of the room.

Mary had supper ready shortly after they

reached home, as she had nothing to do but make the tea; and when Nellie was through she had a race around the yard with Bruce, took a turn or two with her hoop, and then went out on the porch where Miss Rachel sat with Tom contentedly purring upon her lap, while she stroked his furry coat and slowly rocked herself back and forth.

Nellie ran back into the house, brought out a low stool upon which she liked to sit, and placed it near her aunt's, brightening at the remembrance of the promise made to her that morning to tell her a nice, true story some evening after supper, when she had nothing special to do. Nellie thought she might just as well claim the fulfillment of that promise now.

The sky was still rosy with the sunset glow, and in the corners and shaded recesses of the yard, where the dusky shadows were deepening, an occasional firefly starred the gloom. In a little while myriads of them would be flashing like tiny sparks in the soft gloaming.

The sound of busy life had ceased in the quiet town, the lights in the houses began to twinkle, and the young moon hung in the pale gold of heaven, from which the rose tint was now fading.

"Well, Aunt Rachel, I'm ready for that pretty story you promised to tell me," said Nellie, sliding her stool closer to her aunt's chair, and raising her innocent questioning eyes to hers. An ecstacy of hope lighted up her fascinating baby face.

Miss Rachel smiled, settled herself back in her chair, musingly continued to stroke Tom's head, and said:

"The story I promised to tell you is a true

one, and the event happened many years ago, at the first Moravian settlement in North Carolina, which is about five or six miles from here; the old village is now almost in ruins. The little colony of Moravians who settled it were a brave, hardy people, and were from Germany and Pennsylvania; and having been accustomed to the cold winters of the North, they were delighted with the mild climate of the South, which as late as December, you know, is often as balmy as the early autumn. The village they built they called Bethabara, and as the country around them was wild and unsettled at that time, they surrounded the little town with a stout stockade, to prevent a surprise from the Indians and for general security in the wilderness. Every improvement bore the marks of their German taste.

"Well, Bethabara was known far and near by the Indians as the Dutch fort, where there were good people and much bread. It is said that during 1757 and '58 more than five hundred Indians passed through the settlement at various times. Because of the war there was a famine in all the surrounding country, extending into the districts of Virginia, and the people came to Bethabara, more than a hundred miles, to buy flour and corn. The brethren had plenty to sell, as they had cleared and planted much land and had raised abundant crops.

"But I must tell you what was inside of the fortifications. There were grouped the queerest cottages, with steep roofs, sometimes jutting far over the door, making a kind of porch, and all built of the strongest material. The doors were cut in half and swung on separate hinges, having the upper half open for ventilation, while

the closed lower half was a kind of protection from sudden intrusion."

"Why, Aunt Rachel, there are houses in this town that have doors cut in two," eagerly interrupted Nellie, "and Julia says the people made them that way to keep the little children from getting out and running away."

Her aunt smiled. "Yes, there are a few very old houses here with doors cut in half; but Julia is mistaken about its having been done to imprison the children. But we'll go on with our story," said Miss Rachel, gently pushing Tom from her lap to the floor. "Outside the fort were the farms, and all the owners lived in the village. One bright, pleasant day in December, just before the Christmas holidays, a group of happy children were playing on the outside of the palisades, while their mothers were busily engaged in spinning and weaving, and others were gossiping with their neighbors as they leaned over the half-opened doors. After awhile the children got tired of their play, and one of them suggested that they get permission to go to the hillside to gather ferns and evergreens, with which to decorate the houses and church for the Christmas holidays. Everyone eagerly agreed to this proposition, so they rushed into the village, and, having obtained the consent of their parents, were soon racing across the meadows to the beautiful moss-clad hills in the distance. The men were at work in the fields, their guns near by, for in the forest beyond lay the war path of the Cherokee Indians, along which they passed to attack the Indians in Virginia.

"The day was very beautiful; the birds were singing in the trees and hedgerows, and coveys

of partridges whirred up in their flight from amongst the stubble. The older boys scampered up the hills and gathered evergreens, for every cottage had its Christmas tree, and the church was always decorated for the season. The girls gathered ferns, mosses and berries, while they sang gay songs.

"Toward evening the boys came from the hills loaded with cedar boughs, others had laurels gathered from distant hills, which were heaped upon rude sheds, and joining the girls, they all started for home, quite tired out but very happy, and singing as merrily as larks. I said all started for home. No, there was one left behind, but the merry party, all unconscious of their loss, hurried homeward. The one left behind was a sweet little girl, who was the pride of the village and the pet of her household. She was gay and full of life, and had wandered alone farther round the hill, attracted by stray creepers of trailing evergreen pine and the lovely ferns which seemed to grow larger and greener as she crept along the slope.

"She wandered on further and further away from her companions, until the deepening shadows caused her to turn and try to retrace her steps and join her little friends; but she soon found that they were out of hearing, and all was silent in the dark, damp wood. She was a long way from the path, still she wandered on in the direction of home, as she thought; but she saw no familiar landmark, and just as she was about to call, she felt a slight touch on her shoulder that startled her; but thinking it was a cedar twig, she did not cry out. Although she was restless and uneasy, and anxious to reach home, she did not feel the least fear.

"She went on, and again a sharper touch nearly turned her round, and, as before, she thought it was a cedar bough that had been the cause. It was now getting quite dark, and the undergrowth was almost impassable, but, hoping soon to reach the meadow and see the light of the town, she hurried on as best she could. She knew she was lost, yet she felt strangely calm and fearless. Every now and then she thought she was touched, and once so strongly that she sat down upon a log, buried her face in her hands and prayed silently. Presently, the moon rose and the gloomy forest was quite bright with the moonlight.

"All at once a strangely human cry aroused her, and getting upon her feet, she was about to answer, when a sudden touch almost sent her prone to the ground."

"Oh, Aunt Rachel, what was it?" asked Nellie, with a stifled exclamation of dismay, half rising and dragging her stool closer to her aunt. She glanced furtively round and all about her, and then sat down with a blank stare.

"Pshaw! Nellie, if you are going to get frightened at my story, I'll not tell any more of it," said Miss Rachel, softly stroking the little nervous hand, which had instinctively crept into her lap. "It is such a pretty story, I think, besides it is a true one, and ends nicely, just like those in your little story book. Shall I go on with it?"

"Oh, yes, I want to hear it all. You may go on, Aunt Rachel, I'm not afraid now," Nellie said with something between a smile and a long-drawn sigh.

"All right, then, I'll go on," returned her

aunt. "Well, the little girl quickly rose to her feet, and a lowering cedar limb swayed to and fro—she thought again that she had been struck by it. She was almost ready to give up now, and she was very tired, yet that strange confidence kept her silent. She sat down, and then she thought she heard the patter of little feet, and, as she sprung up again, she was rudely forced, as she thought, into a circular cedar brake, like an arbor in a well-kept park. Then she heard the cry again, but the mysterious touch kept her quiet; and at last, completely overcome by fatigue, she went to sleep. Again a shrill cry awoke her; and as she was about to answer, a bright light surrounded her and a gentle touch silenced her. This time she was very much startled, but the moonlight caused her to think she might have been mistaken both in the halo and touch. She again fell asleep.

"In the village all was confusion and distress when the loss of the child was discovered. Wild with grief, the children told their story. They thought the little girl had returned with the boys who brought the laurels; among them was her brother; but not being found, the men of the settlement started out, headed by her father, and they scattered through the forest with lighted torches.

"The father and three other men went to the mill, thinking perhaps she had gone there, as she had friends living near by. Not finding her there, the father, almost frantic with grief, went to the hill amongst the cedar brakes. The men had gone but a little way before a fearful cry rang out on the night air. They knew but too well what it meant, and the poor father was so

overcome that he staggered and fell across a fallen log.

"But he soon recovered himself, and felt a strange comfort; but the others expected to find the child dead. When they had reached an opening in the forest, they saw a treacherous panther stealing along the edge of the wood, and presently it leaped out in the bright moonlight. The men carried their rifles and fired, and the next moment the animal dropped dead in his tracks.

"After they had made sure that the panther was dead, led by a guiding hand, they came to a clump of cedars. The father noticed the singular shape, then he pulled the boughs apart, and there upon the ground he found his darling child asleep. He was so overcome with joy that he caught the startled child in his arms, pressed her to his heart, carried her out to his companions, and they all sank on their knees and thanked God for His merciful care of the little one.

"The faith of the brethren was strong, and the first thing they did was to remember their Lord and Master, who had wrought this miracle. The little girl told her story as her happy father carried her home. It was a long distance, and before they were quite out of the forest, day had begun to break. Her father told her it was her Guardian Angel who had touched and kept her quiet, and gave her the strength to go on until the cedar grove was found, and she was allowed to sleep in peace.

"The good brethren broke forth in songs and thanksgivings as they approached the hillside, and the villagers knew by the hymn-tune that the child had been found unharmed and well.

"The mother was out in the meadow first, followed by the good pastor and the people; and there in the open meadow, in the early morning, the mother clasped her child to her breast, the whole congregation knelt, while the pastor returned thanks to God for His goodness. As they returned home they all sang a hymn of praise.

"The next day was Christmas, and the people gathered in the church and enjoyed a heartfelt love-feast, strengthened in their faith as the pastor repeated the story of the lost child, as told him by the little girl.

"Every one was deeply affected, and when the little tapers were given the children, as is the Moravian custom, all was joy and brightness. The beautiful Christmas anthem was sung with unusual fervor, and it really seemed as if the Christ-child had indeed hovered over the village.

"Now my story, which is called 'The Guardian Angel,' is finished. What do you think of it, Nellie?" Miss Rachel asked, looking down in the little earnest, upturned face, bathed in the soft radiance of the lamplight which shone through the open window. The moon had set by this time and millions of diamond stars throbbed from horizon to zenith in the high, clear vault above.

Nellie uttered a deep sigh when her aunt had finished. "Oh, I like it very much. And whatever became of the little girl—I mean the one that was lost in the woods and found?"

"I do not know. I've told you all I ever heard of her history. But even had she have lived to a very old age, she would have been dead many years ago."

Nellie shivered as with cold, and just then the town clock began to strike.

They both listened, and when it had sounded, Miss Rachel rose and took up her chair. "Come, let us go in. The air seems too cool for you out here, and, besides, it is time you were in bed."

Nellie picked up her stool and followed her aunt into the brightly lighted room. Mary was folding the pillow-shams, which she had taken from Miss Rachel's bed. She had already put Nellie's little bed in order, ready for her to retire.

Mary was so intent with what she was doing that she did not hear Miss Rachel and Nellie enter, and apparently was unconscious of their presence in the room, until Nellie crept up behind her and flung her arms around her waist, holding her tightly.

Mary turned round, smiling, and Nellie burst into a merry peal of laughter.

"Did I frighten you, Mary?" she asked.

"No, you little witch; I knew who you were. Now I'm going to put you to bed to pay you back." Mary took hold of her, and began to undress her.

"All right, I'm awfully tired and sleepy, any way," and she yawned elaborately. Half an hour later Nellie was in bed and sound asleep, while Miss Rachel sat reading by the shaded lamp-light.

CHAPTER VI.

It was late one warm afternoon, the fourth day after Dr. Leslie's and Mrs. Grayson's departure for New York. Miss Rachel had just gone out to the milk-cart, which stopped regularly before her gate to deliver her daily supply of milk; and while she stood waiting for the milkman to fill her pitcher, she heard steps behind her.

"Mary, is that you?" she called. The girl advanced and stood framed in the doorway.

"Where is Nellie?"

"I think she is in the garden. I'll go and see."

"No, no; wait, Mary!" hastily interrupted Miss Rachel, with a peremptory wave of her hand.

Mary stopped abruptly.

"I received a telegram from Dr. Leslie half an hour ago," Miss Rachel began, "and Mrs. Grayson and the little girl they've adopted will be home to-night. Get Nellie's things together and put them in her valise, and as soon as we've had supper, Nellie and I will go up on the car, so I can open and light the house and have everything in readiness."

Just then a noise of joyous laughing and scuffling came from the porch, and Nellie and Bruce came dashing into the room.

"Get down, Bruce! get down, I say! See how you've torn and soiled my dress with your big, dirty paws!" shouted Nellie, playfully beating him with her hat, but laying on the strokes with all her strength, while with the revival of every blow he continued his frolic, till Mary

came to her rescue, and in a voice of authority ordered him out of the room.

Nellie dropped, panting, into a seat. "I'm all out of breath," she said, then leaned back against the chair and brushed the encroaching hair out of her eyes with the back of her hand, drawing a long, quivering breath as she did so.

Her aunt laughed. "Of course you have some breath left or you couldn't talk."

"Well, I didn't mean that, exactly; I mean I haven't got much.'

"After supper Mary will change your soiled dress for a fresh one," Miss Rachel said.

"Why, Aunt Rachel?" exclaimed Nellie, roused at once. "What am I going to put on a clean dress to-night for? Are you going to have company?" She looked with curious eagerness up into her aunt's face.

"Come and get your supper first, then I'll tell you why." Miss Rachel crossed the room, resumed her seat and began to pour the tea. "I have some good news for you—that's sufficient for the present." Miss Rachel smiled with an air of grim satisfaction.

"Do please tell me now, Aunt Rachel. I want to know so much," pleaded Nellie; and in the swift revulsion of feeling she was alert with life and animation.

"No, not until you have had your supper." Her aunt smiled again and shook her head.

Nellie's face fell instantly, but she sat down to the table very demurely, unfolding her napkin and carefully spread it over her lap.

After she had hurriedly dispatched her supper, she looked inquiringly at her aunt.

"Are you through already?" asked Miss Ra-

chel, glancing at her plate. "Why, you haven't eaten any honey and sweet buns; I thought you were so fond of them."

"I am, but I don't care about them just now." Nellie folded her napkin and slipped it into the ring, and when Miss Rachel presently rose from the table, she watched her with intensifying interest.

"I had a telegram from your uncle this afternoon, and your mother will be home to-night; so we are to get ready and go to the car right away." Miss Rachel was busy putting away the tea things, and she did not see Nellie's face.

"Really, Aunt Rachel? Oh, oh; I am so glad," she almost screamed. She was athrill with delight, and for a moment could not say another thing—words absolutely failed her. She sprang from her seat and flew into the kitchen.

"Oh, Mary, mamma's coming home—is coming this very night, and is almost here! Do come and help me get on another frock right now. Aunt Rachel says I must, and we are to go right away. Aren't you glad, Mary, that mamma's coming home?"

Nellie walked demurely beside Miss Rachel, with little short, tripping steps. till they had reached Main Street, where they were to await the coming of the West End car, then she fluttered off across the street where several persons had gathered, evidently for the same purpose. Just as Miss Rachel and Mary joined the goup, she heard some one say, "Now, we'll have to wait fifteen minutes longer, for the West End car has just gone up."

"Well, there's nothing to do but be patient and wait," mused Miss Rachel, half aloud, as

she resolutely took up her position, with that sombre dignity peculiar to her, among the chattering group.

The whitest of summer mists delicately veiled the moon, but the invading rays, which pierced it and silvered the quaint old town, made a picture of matchless beauty and witchery. Along the elm-embowered street pleasant songs and laughter floated out on the delicious air, and melted away into a languid stir further down, where the street darkled away in the gloom. Presently, a gentle wind rose and swayed the pendulous boughs of the tall elms hither and thither, printing tremulous shadows on the dusty pavement beneath.

At that moment Nellie caught sight of a familiar figure that came round the corner and joined the waiting group, then stepped into the range of the moonlighted street and looked anxiously about, as if seeking some one.

"Oh!" cried Nellie, in a sudden glow of pleasure and enthusiasm, "There's Dr. Seaton!" and before her aunt could repress her, she ran up to him and caught him by the hand. Dr. Seaton started, with a look of astonishment.

"Why, heigh, Nellie. Where did you come from?"

His tone was kind and gay.

She laughed but did not heed his question. "Mamma's coming home to-night, Dr. Seaton, and going to bring a little girl with her named Ruth, and I'll have some one to play with me—Aunt Rachel and I are going home to meet them, and we are waiting for the car now."

Nellie made a lovely picture as she stood there, clearly defined in the moonlight, her embroidered

white dress belted with a broad blue sash, carelessly knotted in the back and the long golden curls tied back with a ribbon of the same hue. Mary had fastened a bunch of large purple violets on the bosom of her dress among the fleecy lace, and a teasing wind blew their fragrance all about her.

"Where is your Aunt Rachel?" asked Dr. Seaton, still holding her hand and looking in the direction of the spectral figures a little apart from them. "Have you been a real good girl since mamma left, and had a pleasant visit to your aunt?" he added, as they moved off to find her.

She looked up at him ruefully, and seemed not to like his implied inference about her good behavior.

"Of course I've been a good girl. You can ask Aunt Rachel if you don't believe me."

A gleam of amusement shone in his eyes. "Certainly, I believe you, Nellie. But we are not going to fall out and quarrel like naughty children, are we?"

"Quarrel!" she repeated, with her old eager persistence, "I should think not." She flashed a radiant look at him, and her little heart softened more and more toward him. "I think you are ever so nice." Dr. Seaton laughed at the admission.

"Oh, here's Aunt Rachel now," she said.

"I'm going to sit by you in the car," murmured Nellie, clinging fast to her friend's hand.

"Where are you going to get off?"

"Nellie! Nellie!" Miss Rachel called to her in a tone of reproach and correction, "don't be troublesome."

"Oh, that's all right," Dr. Seaton answered, following her gesture with a smiling glance. "Nellie and I are the best of friends."

They had reached the car, and he extended his hand to her as he spoke and helped her up the step, then lifted Nellie lightly after her; and as he turned to take the valise from Mary, Bruce sprang past him onto the platform, almost upsetting a small boy who stood in his way, and naturally followed Nellie into the car. The conductor frowned savagely and muttered something about dogs being such a nuisance.

Presently the car stopped before the brightly lighted double-galleried hotel and Dr. Seaton got directly up. "Here's my stopping place," he said. "Good-bye, Nellie," holding out his hand; "I hope we shall meet again before long." Then hastily bidding Miss Rachel good-night, he got down the steps.

Nellie sprang suddenly upon her knees again, and threw kisses from her finger tips out the window to him, until Miss Rachel pulled her almost forcibly down into the seat. She found that some of her own obstinacy confronted her occasionally through Nellie, but in a milder form. "What does make you behave so, Nellie?" she said testily, putting on her hat and making ineffectual attempts to get it on straight.

"Oh, I wasn't doing anything, Aunt Rachel, just throwing kisses to Dr. Seaton," she said plaintively; "I think he's ever so nice, and real pretty, too; don't you, Aunt Rachel?"

The moon had quite gone down by the time they reached home, but the myriads of twinkling stars shone with a clear, white brilliancy and sparkled on the dewy green of the lawn

and the foliage of the well-kept shrubbery, every leaf of which looked as if it were set in a rim of silver.

Miss Rachel and Nellie walked around to the rear of the house. A light burned in the servants' room, but they came upon Aunt Milly and Julia sitting outside the doorway, the lamplight casting grotesque shadows of them on the white-sanded space before the door. They got up directly they saw Miss Rachel.

"There ain't nothin' th' matter, is there Miss Rachel?" Aunt Milly asked quickly.

Although Miss Rachel had locked the doors and taken the keys with her, the day she had given the house a thorough overhauling, she left Aunt Milly in charge with a duplicate key, and gave her access to the rooms in the rear which interiorly communicated with those in front of the house and the left wing, by heavy sliding doors, which were rarely closed as they were hung with silk and damask portieres.

When Miss Rachel entereed the house—which she did by the back entrance, as Aunt Milly had already opened the door—she made her way straight to the front hall, lighted the chandelier both here and in the sitting-room, then took a hand-lamp and made desultory excursions through each room to ascertain that everything was just as she had left it. Quite an hour later she went into the nursery. Aunt Milly had put Nellie to bed, and herself had fallen asleep in a capacious rocking-chair beside the low couch, with her hands clasped upon her lap, her head thrown back, and from her wide-opened mouth came heavy respiration which from time to time deepened into a hoarse snore, but which even in

her sleep she made visible efforts to suppress. For a moment Miss Rachel paused and stood regarding her with an uncertain air. She seemed to be resting so comfortably that she disliked to disturb her, but let her sleep on till she'd had her nap out.

"No, I won't awaken her," she mused, in the excess of her indulgence; but as she turned to leave the room her hand came in contact with some dainty trifle upon the table beside which she was standing, and before she could arrest it, it fell with a jingling crash to the floor and shivered into a thousand atoms.

Aunt Milly sprang suddenly to her feet with a startled look in her wild-staring eyes. "Lord-a-massy! What was that?" She rubbed her eyes and glanced about her.

Miss Rachel laughed. "Aunt Milly I'm sorry I frightened you. It was nothing but a little vase I knocked off the table, and it struck against a chair and broke before I could catch it. I'm afraid it was the one Carl gave Nellie for a Christmas present, and one she thought so much of," said Miss Rachel, stooping to gather up the sparkling fragments. She lowered the lamp and examined them. "Yes, it is the identical vase, and I must get her another one like it."

"You jes' let 'em be, Miss Rachel, an' I'll get the duster an' pan an' brush 'em up rale clean," said Aunt Milly. She left the room, but came back in a few minutes, and soon had the wrecked vase in a shining heap upon her pan; then she rose to her feet.

"There is no need of your sitting up till Helen comes, Aunt Milly. I'm not going to bed; and if I should want anything, Julia will be in this

room and I can call her. Helen generally wishes a cup of tea after she has been traveling at night, and it will be no trouble to prepare it for her when she comes. I see you have the bed ready for the child that Helen is to bring home with her. That's all right; I think it is best that she and Nellie should have separate beds—children rest better, too, when they sleep alone."

While Miss Rachel was talking Aunt Milly remained standing, loafing up against the doorway, carefully holding the pan and duster in her hand; and when she paused, Aunt Milly gave one of her customary grunts, and slowly left the room.

The moment Aunt Milly had gone, Miss Rachel took up her lamp and went into the library to get something to read. She went up to the shelves, and holding the light high above her head began scanning the backs of the books up and down with knitted brows and a mouth primly set. After some little time she found the book she wanted, and returned with it to the sitting-room.

As the light from the chandelier gleamed with an uncomfortable, steely glare, she turned it down quite low and lit one of the tall banquet lamps, whose radiance she subdued with its fluted satin shade, and then sat down to read. She was pleasantly conscious of the sweet scent of the flowers that drifted in through the half-shuttered window and filled the peaceful room; but despite all her efforts to keep awake, a drowsiness gradually began to steal over her, her hold on the book relaxed, it slipped to the floor, and soon she was sleeping soundly.

How long she slept she did not know, but she

was aroused by the sound of wheels, and before she was fully awake there was a murmur of voices in the hall without.

She rose hastily, picked up her book and laid it upon the table, then went out to meet her sister. When she had greeted her she glanced around as if she were in quest of some one else she had expected, then paused and suddenly looked blank. Mrs. Grayson had quite lost sight of the fact that Miss Rachel was still ignorant with regard to Ruth's womanhood—that she was a young lady instead of a child, as they had at first surmised; and for a moment both she and Ruth were puzzled at Miss Rachel's strange action. Then the consciousness of the true situation flashed upon her.

"Do excuse me, Rachel! I had forgotten that you did not know," said Mrs. Grayson hurriedly. "This is Ruth Arnold—Ralph's ward. You know we all expected to find her quite a small girl, but instead—" she looked at Ruth, smiling affectionately—"she is a most charming young lady. Ruth, this is my sister, Rachel; and I am sure she must love you when she knows you, as warmly as I do already."

Miss Rachel seemed so taken by surprise that she fell back a step or two, and during the brief interval of silence the three exchanged glances. And then she did something that took Mrs. Grayson entirely by surprise.

She went up to Ruth, took her by the hand, kissed her and cordially welcomed her to her brother's home. Rarely demonstrative even to those whom she knew most intimately, and never to strangers, Mrs. Grayson sincerely appreciated this unusual manifestation of her sister's gra-

ciousness, and when she had an opportunity, she frankly told her so. Without further delay they passed on into the sitting-room, where Julia had suddenly flared up a broad glow of light.

Mrs. Grayson assisted Ruth to remove her things, while Miss Rachel and Julia went to prepare the tea. Ruth sank into the luxurious chair which Mrs. Grayson wheeled forward for her, inwardly glad to be beyond the noisy clangor of the cars, and thankful, too, that they were safely at their journey's end at last.

"If you will excuse me, my dear," said Mrs. Grayson, after seeing that Ruth was as comfortable as she could make her, "I will go into the nursery to see Nellie, though I am sure she has been asleep hours ago."

"Oh, yes; please go, Mrs. Grayson. Do not mind me. I should not like to think that I had kept you," said Ruth hurriedly. "I hope she has been perfectly well."

Mrs. Grayson presently came back smiling, "Yes, she is sleeping soundly and sweetly, and seems as well as when I left her."

For several minutes Ruth did not stir nor speak. She never complained, but just now her attitude expressed great weariness, and Mrs. Grayson went up to her and laid her hand caressingly upon her shoulder.

"I'm sure that you are very tired, child; and as soon as you've had a cup of tea and some refreshments you must retire. You ate no supper, and very little dinner, and I do not like to have you go to bed feeling famished."

After Ruth had protested that she did not feel hungry, Mrs. Grayson added: "There is no need of your coming down to breakfast in the morn-

ing if you should prefer to stay in bed and sleep —or even till you are thoroughly rested. It will be no trouble to send your breakfast to you, and will in no wise interfere with any of my arrangements."

Mrs. Grayson looked tenderly down into the uplifted, tired eyes, as she spoke.

"Thank you, Mrs. Grayson. You are very kind. But I think after a night's rest and quiet I shall be all right again."

Just then Miss Rachel and Julia came in, the latter bearing the silver tea-tray with dainty cups and saucers, and Miss Rachel had the tea-urn and some light refeshments. In a little while she brought Ruth a cup of fragrant tea, which she drank more to gratify Miss Rachel than because she really wanted it, but declined any other refreshment.

When the things had been removed, Mrs. Grayson rose, spoke a few words aside to her sister, and then turned to Ruth.

"Now, my dear, I will show you to your room. Rachel will occupy to-night the one adjoining yours, and as the light will burn in the hall, you need not feel nervous or the least afraid. To-morrow I shall make some other arrangement, and give you a room near my own, if you prefer it."

"You see we thought you were a little girl," interposed Miss Rachel, pleasantly, "and so made arrangements for you to sleep in the nursery with Nellie."

"Then that is my proper place," laughed Ruth, good-humoredly, "and why not let me sleep there to-night?"

"I'm afraid Nellie would have you up before day," Mrs. Grayson said, smiling. "She is such a restless little body, and generally gets up with the birds. Julia, bring Ruth's hat and bag," she added, as she moved away to show Ruth to her room.

CHAPTER VII.

When Ruth awoke the next morning she lay still for a few moments, surveying her strange surroundings with puzzled surprise. Then she remembered where she was. As she looked about her she could not help noticing the exquisite sense of harmony in the beautiful and luxurious appointments of the room.

The furniture was white mahogany, exquisitely carved in roses in relief, and ornamented in cream and gold. The walls were hung with well chosen pictures. The roof of a bay window made an alcove, which was draped across the front with curtains of silk bolting-cloth, thin as a fairy web, and embroidered with roses, pink and yellow, drooping their delicate petals from fold to fold. Inside the alcove was a dressing table of white mahogany, fitted up with swinging brass mirrors and draperies, the latter being of the same design and material as the curtains. The white mantel was also carved in roses in relief, while the tiled hearth was surrounded with a brass fender of artistic design and workmanship. In the centre of the inlaid floor was a carpet of thickly piled Wilton, pearly in ground and over-strewn with pink roses.

Overhanging all this was a ceiling of pale blue, with radiating circles and sections, and these were garlanded with pink roses. One trailing branch wandered out across the blue, and around the roses on its stem a swarm of butterflies fluttered, making the central ornamentation of the ceiling. Opening off the bedroom was a dainty toilet-room, fitted up with every luxury.

With that feeling of homesickness and strangeness, mingled with her surroundings, and with an aching sense of desolation because of her recent bereavement, Ruth rose and dressed herself and went to the window, upon which the sun was shining full and filling the room with its golden effulgence.

A wandering odor of delicious sweetness stole up from the rose-garden upon which she looked, and which was filled with the rarest flowers, bathed in dew and flashing like silver in the sunlight. The sky was cloudless, and among the mantling leaves of the trees many sweet warbles were heard; but loud and clear above them all rose the notes of a mocking-bird, that seemed to fairly gurgle with ecstatic gushes, then suddenly changed, and began to pour forth defiant menaces at the very top of his voice. For a moment Ruth forgot her trouble, and stood like one entranced by the sweet influence of the time and scene. Then she let her eyes wander off in the distance, which was mysterious with silvery haze, out of which rose a purple mass, towering upward, and that at first view was hardly discernible; but as the morning sun lifted itself over the lovely landscape and the guazy mist melted, the purple mass assumed a well-defined, stately size, with its cloud-capped summit, and now stood out in serene beauty and grandeur.

From the midst of the plain it traveled up till its castellated crest seemed to be lost in the clouds. Ruth suddenly recollected Mrs. Grayson's telling her of the lovely view to be had from this bay window, which, from its peculiar structure and situation, commanded an eastern, northern and western view, and that one of the greatest curi-

osities in the world was distinctly visible from this point—that stupendous work of Nature, the Pilot Mountain.

The natural castle which stands on its summit is sheer rock, while the mountain itself is so regularly rounded and so surprisingly similar in the curves of its outlines, as it slopes gracefully upward, that the beholder will persist in believing that the whole is some gigantic work of art. But on a near approach the most curious and skeptical are satisfied that Deity only could have reared this magnificent pile. Mrs. Grayson told Ruth that the summer before she had visited the Pilot with a party of excursionists, and was one among half a dozen who had scaled the almost perpendicular rock shaft which stood statue-like upon the mountain crest. But she had been more than repaid for the weary struggle she had experienced in climbing the mighty steep, by the sublime prospect which she had enjoyed after reaching the top of the pinnacle.

Ruth felt a sense of awe and reverence creeping over her as she continued to gaze at this wonderful temple, rising up seemingly so near across the sunny expanse of splendor, but which was, in reality, many miles away.

Toward the right a long line of blue mountain peaks rose in bold but not lofty heights, and the warm sun seemed to deepen their mystery as it touched them with a sunny caress.

These were the Spurs of the Brushy and Saura Town Mountains.

Ruth was aroused from her revery by a gentle knock on her door, which made her start nervously, and a conscious color came into her face. To her low "come in," Mrs. Grayson opened the

door, glanced searchingly around the room and paused, hesitatingly, upon the threshold.

"Ah, here you are," she said, stepping forward. "How are you, my dear; and how did you rest last night? I had no idea that you were up so early, but expected to find you in bed, and I hoped asleep. I would not send Julia, because I was afraid that she would awaken you."

"Thank you, Mrs. Grayson; I rested very well, so am feeling much better this morning than I had dared to hope. I haven't kept breakfast waiting, I trust," she added, as the bell rang at that moment.

"Oh, no, it is just ready; and if you wish we will go down now. Nellie is quite impatient to meet you, and seems really disappointed that you are not a little girl like herself."

Ruth noticed that the same exquisite taste and harmony pervaded the arrangement of the hall and the rooms by which they had passed on their way to the dining-room, where they found that Miss Rachel and Nellie had preceded them.

Nellie, who had been receiving a short lecture from Miss Rachel on good behavior during her mother's absence from the room, shrank back and shyly watched Ruth's sweet, questioning face; but when the latter smiled and held out her hand, Nellie yielded at once, ran forward and threw her arms around Ruth's neck.

With an effort Ruth restrained the tears that Nellie's spontaneous greeting had evoked, and as she took the seat Mrs. Grayson assigned to her on her right at the table, she felt an eager determination, despite the strong sense of strangeness which held her, to be interested in and appreciative of all that she knew was being done

for her comfort and happiness. The meal over, Mrs. Grayson, Ruth and Nellie went into the sitting-room.

Ruth's first impression of this charming room, of which she took a rapid survey, was most pleasing. Never were comfort and opulence more gracefully and effectively put into practice than here.

Half an hour later, when Miss Rachel came in, it was to bid them good-bye, and Mrs. Grayson rose to follow her to the door; but before she left the room she turned to Nellie and said: "If Ruth is not too tired, perhaps she would like to go into the rose-garden, and over the house and grounds and get acquainted with her new home. Can't you show them to her, Nellie?"

Nellie sprang up almost before her mother had finished speaking, and fluttered up to Ruth, catching hold of her hand.

"Shall we?" she eagerly asked, looking up into the lovely face bent toward her.

"Yes, I shall be very glad to go," said Ruth; "but I must get my hat; and if you will wait here I'll be back in a few minutes."

"Oh, mamma has two or three garden hats in the hall, and if you don't mind wearing one, I'll go and get them, and you can select the one you like." Without waiting for Ruth to refuse or acquiesce, she ran into the hall, and presently came back with her own hat on, and two of her mother's—one in either hand.

"Take your choice," she said, holding the hats towards Ruth. "This is the nicest one, I think," holding up a walking hat of black straw trimmed in black ribbon and a raven's wing. The broad-brim garden hat she had cunningly slipped behind her.

Ruth laughed. "You've left me no choice but to submit to your selection." She held out her hand for the hat, and when she had put it on, Nellie asked,

"Now, where shall we go first?"

"Well, I'll let you decide that, too."

"Then we'll go into the rose-garden first and see the flowers while the dew is on them. Mamma says they are prettier then. The walks are wide and clean, so you'll not get wet from the dew. I'll get mamma's flower shears and cut you some roses for your vases. I know just where to get them. I heard mamma tell Aunt Rachel this morning that if you're not afraid to stay up-stairs, she would let you have the room up over hers for your room—where you stayed last night, you know. Before you came we all thought you were a little girl like me, so Aunt Rachel had a bed put in the nursery for you. I was awfully sorry when mamma told me this morning that you were grown up, but I'm not now—that was before I saw you, you know. Please wait here—Miss—Ruth—" Nellie hesitated and looked puzzled—"I don't know what I must call you?"

"Cousin Ruth," quickly suggested Ruth, smiling.

"Well, Cousin Ruth, please you wait here till I put away this hat and get mamma's shears, so I can cut you some flowers—I'll be back real quick."

She vanished like a fairy, but presently came back with the flower shears, which she was snapping in such a way as to threaten a dissolution of their fastenings. "Come on, I'll show you the way," she said gayly, her little heart ex-

panding with all kinds of generous designs for Ruth's enjoyment as they started out on their tour of inspection.

Ruth lingered admiringly over each detail of lavish loveliness, and when Nellie finally paused in the midst of her prattling and asked Ruth what she thought of her new home, she said, "Oh, it is beautiful, wonderfully beautiful, and I never fancied that I was coming to such a lovely place as this."

"Shall we go and have a swing in the hammock now, or shall we go in? It's awfully nice down yonder under that big oak." Nellie glanced in the direction of the tree, and then looked eagerly up at Ruth.

"Thank you, Nellie. But let us go indoors now before the sun wilts our flowers, and put them in water; it would be a pity for them to die so soon. See, they are beginning to droop already."

The next moment she held them out under the spray of the fountain. Nellie imitated her action, but when she withdrew them from the feathery mist she gave them a sudden flirt, which sent a shower of rose-petals and crystal drops flying in every direction.

"Oh, do excuse me, Cousin Ruth; I believe I threw some water on your dress. I am so sorry."

"Never mind that; there is no harm done."

"Come on now," said Nellie, "Mamma said I must show you the house, too; but you'll be too tired to go all over it to-day—I'll just show you Uncle Ralph's rooms—his office and study—and the parlors, which are sort of off from the other rooms. Uncle Ralph says he is going to have the back parlor made into a conservatory,

to open into the front parlor and the old conservatory. I heard him telling mamma how he was going to have it done, but I hope he won't spoil the parlors. These are Uncle Ralph's rooms," she added, as they reached the left of the entrance where were Dr. Leslie's private office and study, which communicated with a paved walk by a door in the side of the gable. After inspecting these beautiful rooms, they passed on to the elegant parlors.

Ruth uttered an exclamation of admiration and delight as they crossed the threshold and stood within the luxurious rooms.

Everywhere there were many gems of art, rare pictures, statuary, rich tapestries, lacquered metals, elegant books, and everything that taste could suggest and money purchase—and all most exquisitely arranged about the luxurious rooms, indicating the presence of a mistress of unerring taste.

"I just know you are tired, Cousin Ruth; so I'm going to take you to mamma's room now, where you can rest," said Nellie, running on a little ahead of her; and as soon as they were in the room, she wheeled a low rocker beside the open window, and motioned to Ruth to take it, adding:

"This is for you, Cousin Ruth, and here is a fan, too. Give me your hat and flowers, and I'll go and get you some ice-water. Mamma will be in presently, but you musn't get lonely while you are waiting for her."

"No, I'll not, Nellie," said Ruth, smiling; "you are very kind, but please don't trouble to wait on me, or you'll be spoiling me. I don't care about the water just now, but if you will

tell me where to find what I may need, I'm sure I shall manage very well."

Ruth glanced curiously around the delightful room as she spoke. Surely the mistress must possess a certain witchery to be able to give this room, as she did to all the others, that glamour so exceedingly fascinating. She knew that it was not money alone that produced the result she saw.

"Oh! it's no trouble at all," said Nellie, "and I like—, I want to do something for you. Mamma told me before you came that I must be very kind to you and love you as a sister. I have two sisters in heaven—sister Maud and little Annie, but I don't recollect anything about them. Mamma tells me about them often, and sometimes it makes her sad, and she cries. I have a little brother in heaven, too; and then I have a big brother, Carl, who has gone to Europe, and will be away two years. That is his picture hanging over there near mamma's bed. Don't you think he is very good looking?" Nellie asked in the most matter-of-fact tone, looking toward the picture. But before Ruth could reply, Mrs. Grayson called to Nellie from the dining-room; and with a--"I'm coming, Mamma," she hurried off, leaving Ruth alone.

Thus forsaken she arose, and went and stood before the picture to get a better view of it.

It was a life-size portrait done in oil, and was cased in a richly carved gilt frame. Ruth was by no means an art-critic, but she had had opportunities of seeing many excellent pictures by some of the best masters, and she believed this was a perfectly faithful likeness of the original. For several minutes she stood steadily regarding

the handsome face on the canvas, until the shadow seemed to grow into a living reality.

"What do you think of Carl's likeness?" She started and turned, to meet the smiling eyes of Mrs. Grayson, who stood behind her.

Ruth glanced quickly back at the picture, more to cover her confusion than because she did not have a ready answer.

"Now, don't compliment it, dear, unless you can do so conscientiously," continued Mrs. Grayson, with that soft light in her eyes which always came to them when she spoke to Ruth, or when she talked of Carl.

"No, I shall not. I think the picture is very handsome indeed; and if this is a faithful copy of Carl—I mean your son, and evidently it is—I do not wonder that you feel very proud of him." She answered with perfect candor and sincerity.

"Thank you, child. The picture was painted by one of the best artists in New York last winter, and I do not think he could have obtained a better likeness. It seems to me that the artist caught the true conception of his character—that subtle suggestion of individuality—as well as the physical beauty of the face," she said, with all a mother's love and pride. She looked intently at the picture a few minutes, sighed softly, and turned to say something to Ruth, when at that moment the door bell rang, and a little later Virgil entered and handed her three cards on a silver salver.

"Ladies to see Mrs. Grayson," he said, bowed, and withdrew.

"Mrs. Wellington, Mrs. Biddle and Mrs. Raynor," Mrs. Grayson read aloud, and dropped the cards into a receiver on the table.

"I shall have to ask you to excuse me, my dear; and after my visitors leave, I wish to have a talk with you. Make arrangements about your room and some other little matters."

As she turned to leave the room she paused in the doorway, looked back and said:

"You will find several late magazines and papers on the table; and if there are any you should like to take to your room, you need feel no hesitancy in doing so."

When Mrs. Grayson had gone Ruth looked over the magazines and papers, selected a Century and Scribner, and went to her room.

CHAPTER VIII.

As soon as the visitors had gone, Ruth came down-stairs and went to the library; and finding the door open and Mrs. Grayson sitting at her writing desk, she did not knock but simply asked, "May I come in?"

"Certainly, my dear; I am glad you came. I was just thinkng about you. Come in and have this seat here near me. I want to talk with you."

Ruth complied, then clasping her hands together in her lap, sat quietly waiting. Her mourning draperies seemed to accentuate the pearly freshness and delicacy of her fair face, which now wore an expression of sweet, pathetic earnestness.

Mrs. Grayson hesitated a moment before she began to speak, then she went on very gently and lovingly.

She had a wonderful way of saying even unpleasant things pleasantly, and now as she talked something in her tone and manner broke the spell of vague uneasiness which had begun to settle in a sort of formless, depressing sensation about Ruth's heart.

This was the first time she had spoken to her on the subject of her father's death; and when she saw the expression of pain and sadness in her face which her words had stirred, a broad, deep sympathy surged up afresh in her heart for this dear orphan girl. But she did not pause, because she knew that the sooner this ordeal was over the better it would be for her.

"I dare say, my dear," she went on, "that before his death your father acquainted you with

something of his early history—at least, that part of it pertaining to the peculiar relationship which once existed between himself and your guardian—a kind of David and Jonathan friendship, that nothing ever should have disturbed; so all this I shall not go over now." She paused a moment, then continued. "In a letter to my brother, written a few days before your father's death, and mailed immediately after, he outlined plans for your future, which he suggested that we should carry out if we thought best to do so. You may know what these plans are?" Mrs. Grayson looked at Ruth interrogatively.

"Yes, he told me," she said, making an affirmative movement of the head, at the same time.

"They are more especially connected with your musical education," pursued Mrs. Grayson, "which, of course, we are perfectly willing that you should continue; but instead of teaching after you are graduated in music, as your father suggested, we desire that you should remain with us, making this your permanent home. I should be glad if you could regard my brother as an uncle, and myself, not as an aunt—but as a mother; that is, I mean look upon us in the sense of that relationship toward you, for, indeed, I really love you as a daughter, and I'm sure you'll find my brother a most genial and warm-hearted uncle. My oldest daughter, Maud, died several years ago, and had she lived she would have been very nearly your age now. I would have you take dear Maud's place in my heart and home."

Ruth had listened so far in silence, her hands tightly clasped, while tears, which she could not restrain, rushed to her eyes. The magnanimity of Mrs. Grayson's offer, her disinterested love

and friendship, and her generous words of trust and faith in herself, all these awoke a strange thrill in her heart, and for a minute she could not speak. When she did it was in a low voice of one struggling to get the mastery of herself, so that she might say something to relieve herself of the burden of gratitude that overwhelmed her.

"Oh, my dear Mrs. Grayson, I cannot tell you how much I thank you; and, indeed, you do not know how unworthy I feel for all your goodness. When papa died I fear—yes, I was very rebellious, for it seemed that God had taken from me not only my best and dearest friend, but the last link that bound me to my earthly home; and now, in a short time, and in such an unexpected way, He has given me such dear, kind friends, a beautiful home, and everything that I could ask or wish to make me happy in this life—oh! I do not deserve it! I do not deserve these blessings, but I shall pray continually that I may not abuse them, nor be forgetful ever again of His loving-kindness to me."

"Yes, with His help, I'm sure you will not abuse them, dear child; and, I believe, too, that we shall get on very happily together," said Mrs. Grayson. "The money which your father left in trust with my brother for you, he will invest in some safe securities, and make over the use of the interest to you, which you will be privileged to spend in such a way as you may think best."

Ruth looked up with an eager gleam in her eyes that made her face shine in spite of its sadness.

"Then I would like by all means to expend a part, outside of the amount required to supply

me with necessary clothing, to complete my musical education, and at the same time resume the studies I laid down when I was suddenly called from school in San Francisco by papa's illness. Have you a good school here where I might do this?"

Mrs. Grayson looked at Ruth as though she were surprised at her question.

"Yes, my dear; the Moravian Academy. Why, child, have you never heard of this famous old school? It is the pride of the two cities, and one of the very oldest seats of learning in the South. It has a peculiarly interesting history, which would make profitable reading, and I hope some one may yet write it out and give it to the public in book form. Since its foundation, in 1802, it has maintained itself without a single endowment from any source.

"A wealthy gentleman, of the Moravian church, bestowed a gift of one thousand dollars to the Art Department in memory of his infant daughter who died some years ago—known as the Louise Memorial; and his brother and another generous-hearted gentleman made valuable donations to the library. Then there was a gentleman from Tennessee who made a similar gift, but no special chair has been endowed. Recently, however, steps have been taken for the establishment of an endowment fund for the Academy, an appropriation of several thousand dollars being made by the Moravian Synod for that purpose; and this has been supplemented by over a thousand dollars from the Academy's Alumnæ, and about two thousand donated by one of the brothers I have mentioned. These amounts, with many donations and legacies that

will, very probably, be received, will cause this endowment to accumulate rapidly, and the Academy doubtless at no distant day will be able to boast of being the best endowed institution in the South.

"Now, with regard to the home-life of the school, it is made as delightful as possible for the pupils, while at the same time strict discipline, thorough teaching and practical instruction are the rules rigidly adhered to and enforced."

"When does the next term begin?" asked Ruth, "I suppose the school is closed now for the summer vacation."

"Yes, so it is. The term generally begins early in September, and sometimes on the opening day as many as two hundred or two hundred and fifty pupils answer the roll-call. A great many years ago the people of the South sent their daughters from distant portions of the country in carriages, by stages, and even in ox-wagons; but that was before there was a railroad anywhere in the United States."

Ruth looked much surprised. "Oh, how times have changed and everything progressed since then," she said. "It seems hard to realize that so much that is really wonderful has been accomplished during the time. I think it would be very interesting to know how many pupils have been graduated from the Academy since it was first established."

"Oh, that is an easy enough matter to find out, for upon the records of the school all the names of the pupils who graduate, and those who do not, are preserved; and, besides, there are many interesting facts relating both to the history of the church and school to be found

upon this record. Sometime since the statement was given to the public through the press—which statement was copied from the correctly-kept school record—that more than ten thousand Alumnæ claim the Academy as their Alma Mater, including some of the most distinguished ladies of the South, who have gone forth to shed an influence upon society, second to none in the nation. Amongst them two have been called upon to do the honors of the White House—Mrs. President Polk and Mrs. Patterson, daughter of President Johnson. Mrs. Stonewall Jackson and Mrs. Gen. D. H. Hill were also educated there.

"Many of the old Alumnæ occasionally send letters to the Academy paper, and to the Alumnæ meeting, which takes place annually during commencement week; and this meeting is always one of the most charming features of that delightful occasion. These letters are full of love and loyalty and veneration for the school of their youth, with messages of encouragement to the teachers who have succeeded those of their day and generation."

"I have read somewhere, that very many of the schools and colleges in the South were closed during the civil war. Was the Moravian Academy closed too?" asked Ruth.

"No, the school flourished all through the war. Parents sent their daughters there for a safe retreat, knowing that evil was less likely to befall them there than elsewhere. When Stoneman's raiding party entered the town, the Mayor immediately surrendered. and together with the President of the Academy, asked that a Federal guard be stationed around the building for protection. This was readily granted, and the teach-

ers and scholars continued their duties unmolested." Mrs. Grayson paused reflectively, then said:

"There is another historical fact connected with this old Moravian town which may interest you. During the Revolutionary War, it seems that that was a time of great trouble for the Moravians. Having been allowed to hold their own views about not bearing arms and taking oaths, they were sometimes subjected to many disagreeable indignities. Sometimes the Continentals, sometimes the British traveled through the settlement, entailing many losses upon the people. After Cornwallis surrendered and peace was declared, his whole army passed through the town en route to Virginia."

"Certainly they had some unhappy experiences—I mean the Moravians—but it seems they have come safely out of them all," said Ruth, thoughtfully.

"Yes, I believe they have," said Mrs. Grayson. "One afternoon next week we will drive past the Academy, so you can see the buildings; but I don't think you will have an opportunity to go over the grounds and park in the rear till the school opens in the fall. The new Academy was erected on the site of the old congregation house, joining the Academy building on one side and connected with the church by a covered passage-way on the other, built during the year 1854. The main building alone presents a front of one hundred feet—opening directly on the street from the broad portico, built in the Doric style of architecture—four stories in height, a massive pile constructed of pressed red brick. There are north and south wings, broad halls and

well-ventilated rooms, by means of trunk ventilators, four of which run up from the lower floors, extending above the roof. From these trunks, the different rooms are connected by branches. The buildings are supplied with gas and water throughout, and heated by large wood stoves, providing an even temperature during severe weather.

"The broad front doors of the Academy are seldom opened except on grand occasions, as visitors are received at the President's house, in the rear of which is one of the most beautiful parks to be found anywhere. The Principal's house is a gray brick building on the left of the square, and opposite the Moravian church."

Just then the wind swayed out the lace curtain from its fastening, and while Mrs. Grayson was putting it back, Ruth asked:

"Do you think I can secure as good a musical education at the Academy as if I went abroad? Papa was anxious that I should go to the Paris Conservatory, and I suppose I should have gone there had he lived."

"Yes," said Mrs. Grayson. "So far as actual education in music goes, I don't believe there is the least necessity to go away from here to get it, in any branch of the art. You know that a great many first-rate teachers from Europe have come and settled in this country, helping to maintain and raise the standard. Where formerly there was one good teacher, there are now ten, and indeed the number of pupils has increased to even greater extent. I am sure you will find at the Academy here teachers of great skill and distinction, who are thorough masters of their instruments and of musical composition.

The orchestral concerts, which are given at the Academy from time to time, cannot be surpassed, and their choruses can hold their own with the best in the country."

"But don't you think that when one has finished his or her musical studies in this country, it is an advantage to spend some time abroad, especially in Germany, where the devotion to art for the art's sake is more intense and general than in this new country, and where the musical traditions and environments are so strong?"

Ruth asked the question with much serious earnestness, somehow hoping that Mrs. Grayson would verify her opinion on the subject.

"Well, yes; I suppose so," answered Mrs. Grayson, candidly. "The prestige which European travel and study afford, by reason of the prejudice in favor of everything foreign, must not be overlooked. Unquestionably, there is a certain prestige we all acknowledge for the student and professor of music, in the fact that he has studied abroad."

Ruth did not give a direct answer to Mrs. Grayson, but said a little abruptly, "I should like to study Italian, too, because I believe it is the most appropriate and helpful language in the study of vocal art; and French, German and elocution also, I should like to take up again."

"Thorough instruction in all these branches can be had at the Academy; but I'm afraid the line of arduous study that you have marked out for yourself will heavily tax both your time and strength; so I warn you in the outset, that as soon as I detect any evil effects from overwork, I shall put in a vigorous protest, and enforce it, too," laughed Mrs. Grayson, softly.

She rose from her seat, and went up to Ruth and put her hand on her shoulder.

"Would you mind playing one or two pieces for me, dear? I am very anxious to hear you play and sing, too; but I shall not ask you to sing; you may do so if you will," Mrs. Grayson added, with delicate consideration for her late sorrow.

"Of course I will play and sing for you, too, if you desire it," she returned, with a sweet, sad smile, always forgetful of herself or her own feelings when it was in her power to give others pleasure, or when she thought she could be useful to those around her.

Ruth sat down upon the stool and raised her hands to the key-board. All at once the recollection of her recent bereavement was borne in upon her in such an overwhelming degree as to make her almost lose her self-control. She clasped her hands together, and something like a sob escaped her.

The sight of the open instrument recalled to her so vividly the last time she had touched a piano.

With a masterful effort she recovered herself, and again raising her hands to the board, gracefully swept her fingers over the ivory keys. The touch was exquisite. Mrs. Grayson suddenly looked up.

"Is there any special piece you wish me to play?" Ruth asked, quietly turning to her, while a shadow as of some painful memory still hovered over her sweet face.

"No—well, yes—there was a piece; I have been looking for it, but I cannot find it. I must have lent it to some one, and it has not been re-

turned. But play anything you like, child," said Mrs. Grayson, sitting down near the piano.

Ruth turned to the instrument again, and for a moment absently let her fingers wander over the keys. Then, as if utterly unconscious of time and place, a sudden inspiration seemed to come to her, and she played as she had rarely played before.

"You have taken me completely by surprise, child," said Mrs. Grayson, when Ruth had ceased playing, and let her hands slip from the keys to her lap. "I do not know when I have enjoyed such a musical treat. What more is there for you to learn about music," she added, enthusiastically.

"Oh, so much that I do not yet know. I am by no means satisfied with my present attainment, and am so eager to learn more. But I fear I shall never reach that point, even after years of unremitting study, where I can safely cease the battle, and cry—victory! for there yet remains a great deal for me to learn. Now shall I sing something, too?"

"I shall be pleased to hear you, if you are not too tired."

"Oh, no," she returned, brightening, "I'm not tired at all. I am so devoted to music that I quite forget myself when I am playing."

She turned to the piano, played a few chords, and the next moment began to sing. She sang superbly. Every note was true and clear, every phrase full of expression. As one delicious melody after another filled the room, each marked by a depth of earnestness and noble enthusiasm, Mrs. Grayson's bewilderment deepened into the sincerest admiration and enjoyment.

The full, sweet cadence had floated out through the open window, and when she finished and looked round at some unusual stir in the room, she found herself in the centre of an entranced circle of hearers whom she had drawn to her, fascinated and held spell-bound by her matchless voice.

Mrs. Grayson was the first to speak.

"Dear child, you sing divinely. God has indeed given you a marvelous gift, and every day you should thank Him for it; and, too, for that depth of religious feeling which He has deeply implanted in your heart, without which complete success in your art would have been unattainable, however admirable the musical skill is present in your voice. I believe the truth of the fact can be easily proved by many a one's individual experience of singers. '

"Thank you, Mrs. Grayson; it is very kind of you to say these things; and I am very glad, too, that I have been the means of giving you pleasure; and my other hearers, one of whom I have not seen before," she said, as she got up and moved across the room where Aunt Milly sat, just within the doorway, swaying her body back and forth in the abandon of her ecstacy, while the tears coursed down her dusky cheeks. Julia stood leaning up against the doorway, with Virgil on the opposite side, while Nellie, who had been standing immediately behind Ruth, in her eager, impulsive way, clasped her about her waist, telling her that she sang "perfectly beautiful—just like Dot, her pet canary."

"This is Aunt Milly, I believe. I am glad to see you. I hope you are well."

"God bless you, honey, an' the Lord be prais'd.

I been listen' to your beautiful singin', an', for shure, I never 'spected to hear the like of such beyan' the Golden Gates of Heben. Oh, chile—" Aunt Milly broke off abruptly, she was so overcome with her emotion that she could not speak for a little while, but she rose to her feet and presently said in a choked voice, "sometime, chile, I'll talk to you; now I can't; I jes' can't." She wiped her eyes with the back of her hand, gave Ruth a grateful look and left the room.

Very soon the dinner bell rang and Nellie ran in to pilot Ruth to the dining-room.

Late that afternoon Ruth came down-stairs. After taking a few turns up and down the long, cool veranda, which was dimmed by the shade of the trellised rose-vine, she sat down to enjoy the beauty of the scene before her. Every now and then, far down the street, a sound reached her ear, which at first she did not comprehend, but as it drew near, she heard more distinctly the repeated cry, "Daily! Daily!" then for a few moments it seemed to have ceased altogether. "Daily!" suddenly the voice screamed in a shrill tone, startlingly near, and Ruth started from her seat and looked around. Seeing the little barefoot carrier patiently holding out a paper toward her, which he had pulled from the compact bundle he carried under his arm, and staring hard at her, she rose at once and came to the edge of the veranda.

"Must you leave one here?" she asked, taking the paper from his begrimed hands.

"Oh, yes; the doctor takes it. He couldn't do without The Sentinel. I was late getting round this evening. The press got out of fix."

After volunteering this piece of information, he turned briskly away, muttering something to himself, which Ruth overheard, and which made her smile.

"By golly, she's pretty as a pink." Then with careless, swinging strides he went down the walk whistling "Annie Roony," which he interluded at regular intervals with "Daily! Daily!" as he delivered his papers from door to door. Gradually the sound grew fainter and fainter, and finally faded away altogether.

As Ruth turned and walked back to her seat she glanced down with quiet indifference at the paper she held in her hand; but as she was in the act of folding it up, her own name in the list of "Personals," caught her eye, and the next moment she was alert with curiosity and interest. She read: "Mrs. Helen Grayson, who went to New York with her son, who has sailed for Europe, returned home last night accompanied by Miss Ruth Arnold, of California, Dr. Leslie's beautiful ward."

As a rule people like best the papers they are accustomed to read, and sometimes find it rather tedious to read any other. But The Sentinel all at once became imbued with a new interest to Ruth, and she read it quite through before she folded it, and returned to the sitting-room.

CHAPTER IX.

One morning, three days later, as Ruth was coming down-stairs in answer to the late breakfast bell, Nellie waylaid her.

"How sweet you do look this morning, Cousin Ruth," she cried. "Now, just guess who came last night. I shan't tell you."

Ruth laughed; "I'm not clever at guessing, Nellie; but I'll make a venture. Was it your Uncle Ralph?"

"Oh, who told you?"

"No one; but I knew your mother had been expecting him home, and of course supposed that it was he."

"Now come right on in the dining-room and see him," Nellie said, catching her by the hand. "You know Uncle Ralph is the best and grandest man in all the world, and I want you to see him. Breakfast is ready, too."

Dr. Leslie was standing beside the window deeply absorbed in his paper, but looked up just then, as he caught the rustling sound of a woman's garment.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "I did not see you when you first entered the room. It seems quite needless to ask how you are this morning, since you are looking so well."

He took her hand in his as he spoke, and there was something in his elegant, easy bearing which set her entirely at her ease at once.

"Thank you. I am quite well, and really feel better than any day since my arrival. You seem to have a nice climate, and it is much more pleasant here than I had hoped to find it at this season of the year."

"Yes, as pleasant here as you'll find it almost anywhere. Has Mrs. Grayson taken you out driving yet, so you might see something of our pretty town?"

"No, there have been visitors to call constantly since we came, except one afternoon, when she went to see a little sick child, so she has not had an opportunity to do so." Ruth spoke with that unconventional and winsome frankness which was one of her greatest charms, and which her guardian so much admired.

"Then if you have no engagement with Mrs. Grayson this afternoon, I shall be glad to take you out in some of the pleasant parts of our city, and in the suburbs, too, where we have some specially fine drives."

"No, I have no engagement to go out with Mrs. Grayson this afternoon, and shall be pleased to go with you," she said, simply.

After recounting the experiences of his pleasant sojourn in Philadelphia for the last few days, he turned to Mrs. Grayson and asked, "Well, have you decided where you'll go this summer—to the mountains or seashore?"

Mrs. Grayson looked quickly up at her brother, then glanced toward Ruth.

"Really, I haven't thought much about it since my return; but I believe I'm rather inclined to favor the mountains this summer. We might spend two or three weeks at Asheville, take in the Warm Springs, Roan Mountains, Blowing Rock and Waynesville White Sulphur Springs. The latter place is such a delightful summer resort, and we can be so quiet and retired there, that we might spend most of the time at the White Sulphur."

"I think your program is a very pleasant and enticing one," said Dr. Leslie; "but what does Miss Ruth say?"

"Oh, I shall be happy to accede to any plan that Mrs. Grayson may suggest. I should like to see your mountain scenery. Since I've read Christian Reid's book, 'The Land of the Sky,' I am more curious than ever to see the places which she depicts in such glowing terms. But has she not greatly exaggerated them, in her descriptions?"

"Not at all," emphatically responded Dr. Leslie. "I don't think it possible for any one to do our mountain scenery justice in a pen-sketch. No picture is like it, and the richest delineations of glowing fancy in prose and verse, have fallen far behind it. You know that the mountain scenery of North Carolina, because of its grandeur and sublimity, has been called the Switzerland of America. Undoubtedly, for splendor, beauty and variety our mountains will compare with any in the United States."

Nellie handed him her glass just then, and he paused to pour her some milk, then resumed:

"It is a well-known fact that North Carolina has more popular seaside and mountain resorts than any other individual State, as well as a greater variety of gems and precious stones. Yes, I'm sure you'll find at any of the places that Mrs. Grayson has mentioned, picturesque scenery, good society and delightful climate at this time of year; and most of them are easily accessible, too."

There was no surer way of arousing Dr. Leslie's enthusiasm than by speaking of his native State, or whatever concerned her.

"After that emphatic endorsement, Ruth, I fancy we have nothing more to say, but that we'll go," laughed Mrs. Grayson.

"I am ready at any time," answered Ruth, smiling.

"How soon do you think you can get off?" he asked; "best not to put it off too long."

"In about a week or two, I suppose. We'll begin to feel the heat uncomfortably here by that time, and then we'll better appreciate the mountain breezes, as well as the scenery," returned Mrs. Grayson.

"I think we've had some right uncomfortable days already," said Dr. Leslie, making a movement to leave the table.

"Well, one thing is very certain, Mamma," broke in Nellie at last, with a rueful pout; "I don't intend to stay behind with Aunt Rachel this time. Now, aren't you going to let me go with you? Please do, Mamma!" she wailed, one moment rebellious, the next supplicating. She had made repeated attempts before this to get in a word edgewise, but her mother had managed to silence her by a look and a reproving shake of the head, and thus had kept her in the background.

"Why, certainly, pet," laughed Dr. Leslie; "all that has been settled, and I'm the one to stay behind this time."

"Oh, no, Uncle Ralph; you've got to go too," exclaimed Nellie, quickly. "I tell you, you'll have an awful time if you stay with Aunt Rachel. You see when I stayed with her, Carl promised me—"

She stopped short—looked up—then meditatively down at her plate a moment, and looking

eagerly up again, her shining blue eyes flashing with a new light.

"Oh, Mamma, Carl has forgotten his promise. He told me before he went away, if I would be a good little girl and stay with Aunt Rachel till you came back from New York, he would send me something real nice by Uncle Ralph; something that I wanted ever so much, and now he has forgotten—"

"Where shall I take the box that the express wagon has just delivered, sir?" interrupted Virgil, appearing in the doorway, and addressing Dr. Leslie.

"To whom is the box addressed, Virgil?"

"To Miss Nellie Grayson, sir."

"Wooden box, is it?"

"Yes, sir."

"You may take it round to the rear veranda," said Dr. Leslie, and he glanced at Nellie, smiling.

Virgil hesitated a moment, made a low salute, then noiselessly vanished.

Meanwhile Nellie's eyelashes had crept up, and with an incredulous stare, she looked from her uncle to her mother in utter dismay. Then with a prolonged gasp of "O—h," she drew in her breath with a nervous start, sprang from her seat, and fled from the room, upsetting her chair with a loud crash in her hurried flight.

With a hammer and chisel and ringing blows, Virgil was making vigorous efforts to remove the securely fastened lid, while Nellie impatiently pranced and tiptoed all around the box, every now and again urging Virgil to hurry.

"Oh, see, Mamma: a dear little saddle. Isn't it perfectly lovely, Uncle Ralph? I've been wanting one so long, and just like this one.

Cousin Ruth, you may ride on it, too; Carl said he would send me something I wanted, and I'm so glad he sent me this little saddle—the dear, cute little thing."

"What must I do with these, Miss Nellie?" said Virgil, holding up a blue-ribboned, silver-mounted bridle, and the daintiest riding-whip, with a blue silk tassel dangling from the pearl horse-head handle.

In her eagerness to get at the saddle she had overlooked these.

"Oh, they go with the saddle, of course," she said, hastily taking them in her arms. "Look, Mamma, the blue reins and tassel match the blue plush seat on the saddle. Don't you think they are just lovely, Aunt Milly?" she cried, struggling across the porch with the saddle in her arms, the stirrup clinking against the floor at every step, and then piled the whole in Aunt Milly's lap, where she sat on the door-step.

Meanwhile Mrs. Grayson and Ruth had returned to the sitting-room, and ten minutes later Dr. Leslie had ordered his horse and rode away in another part of the city to visit his patients, some of whom had recovered during his absence, and others were convalescent.

He had an extensive practice, and a large part of it was among the laboring class, whose confidence he held, and whose lives it was his chief aim to brighten. Here, he had a broad scope for his work. One needed not a long acquaintance with him before perceiving that profound sentiment of manly honor, that reverence for all truth, loftiness and purity, which made him essentially the warm-hearted, generous and sympathetic man that he was.

It was half-past five o'clock that afternoon when Julia tapped at Ruth's door with a message from the "Master of the Manor."

Ruth was sitting beside the window writing when she came in, but she glanced quickly up with a look of pleased expectation in her face. She had not forgotten her engagement to go driving with her guardian, and she was just wondering if a long round of visits to his patients had not forced him to cancel it; now it seemed that Julia had come in answer to her silent thoughts. She could not help smiling into the girl's face as she hesitated to make known her errand.

"Miss Ruth, Dr. Leslie wants to know if you will be ready to go driving with him at six o'clock?" she said, briefly, evidently relieved that she had got it out at last.

"Oh, certainly. It will take me but a little while to get ready."

Ruth carefully arranged her beautiful hair, exchanged the soft, silky dress she had on for a little heavier one, and putting on her hat and gloves descended to the sitting-room. She glanced expectantly around as she entered, but it was empty. Then she walked to the window and just then saw her guardian coming up the walk, fanning himself with his hat. A slight rain had fallen an hour before, but now the sun had come out brightly, sparkling the emerald lawn and trees and making that iridescent beauty of distance and atmosphere which was enchanting.

"We shall have a pleasant afternoon for our drive," said Dr. Leslie, as he entered the room through the open window. "I was afraid this morning that we should find the dust as well as

the heat uncomfortably disagreeable; but since the rain there is nothing more to be desired."

"Yes, it seems delightful since the shower." Then after a pause, she said, "Dr. Leslie, I hope I'm not interfering with any of your professional arrangements, by accepting your kind offer to take me driving this afternoon."

"Oh, no, child; I have no special calls for the rest of the day, and this is a recreation which I hope we shall both enjoy."

Ruth smiled at his fatherly way of addressing her, and which he did apparently with perfect unconsciousness.

She walked up to him directly, and in her naive, confiding way, held out her hands to him, with a gesture which no one could have resisted. He enclosed them in a cordial clasp.

"Dr. Leslie, I have a favor to ask of you," she said, with that beautiful smile peculiar to her, while her sweet lips trembled. "Will you grant it?"

For the moment he seemed to forget everything, save the extraordinary spell of her peerless beauty; yet instinctively he felt that she would make no request that was indiscreet or unreasonable, and so he might safely promise. "Yes, certainly I will; I am altogether at your service," he answered, smiling down into the lovely eyes, while his own softened and grew very tender, and a deep, yearning passion, which he was powerless to master, suffused every feature. Every word she spoke was like an electric touch upon his heart.

"Well, I want you to call me Ruth, and treat me in many respects as you do Nellie. Papa used to call me Little Ruth—he rarely called me any-

thing else; and, somehow, I do not know why, but I cannot bear for you to call me Miss Ruth."

She withdrew her hands from his and glanced up shyly at him from under her long, dark lashes. All at once it occurred to her that perhaps she had acted too boldly and presumptuously in taking this step; but the bright smile that overspread her guardian's face reassured her.

"Well, Ruth, it shall be just as you wish; and now if I reprove and scold you sometimes as I do Nellie, you promise that you'll not feel that I'm assuming undue authority, and I shall not be called upon to make amends?" He had purposely adopted a humorous tone, though it was full of sweetness and affection.

"Yes, indeed, I'll promise; but I shall try to be very patient and obedient, so you'll have no cause to scold me." Then she asked, glancing toward the clock, "But isn't it time we were going?"

Dr. Leslie took out his watch, compared its time with the clock. "Six o'clock," he said, with apparent surprise; "yes, we would better go."

On the veranda, as they came out, they encountered Mrs. Grayson, holding in her hand a shallow tray-like basket of freshly cut roses, with which she was going to dress the vases.

"Wouldn't you better take a light wrap, dear? It may be cooler when you return," she said.

"I do not think I shall need it. My dress is sufficiently warm, as I put on a thick one."

Mrs. Grayson selected several of her choicest rose-buds, and shaking the rain-drops off of them, handed them to Ruth.

"Take these, dear. They have a delicious odor.

Now, I'll not detain you any longer. I hope you will enjoy your ride—good-bye."

The pony phæton was already at the door. Dr. Leslie helped Ruth in; and when she had taken her seat, he leaned over and tucked the pretty afghan, embroidered in yellow daisies, and then getting in himself, turned the vehicle skilfully around the narrow curve, and drove briskly off down the broad, shaded street in the direction of the famous old Moravian town.

For a few seconds Mrs. Grayson stood gazing reflectively after the departing carriage, and the next moment her mental vision took the form of a vivid reminiscence, and strangely conflicting things. If Ralph had been other than he were, she might have taken this occasion to exalt her own superior foresight in prophesying a tenderer relationship, at some future day, than mere friendly regard, between her generous, noble-hearted brother and his beautiful ward with all her unaffected, delightfully womanly ways.

But Mrs. Grayson was one who did not jump at conclusions, and declined to read between the lines, especially in this instance. She was content to wait whatever the future might unfold. Then her eyes suddenly became infinitely soft and tender in response to some emotions that moved her soul, and she turned and walked slowly into the house.

CHAPTER X.

Two or three squares were rapidly passed, and then Dr. Leslie checked his horse to a slower pace. "If we travel at this rate," he said, "I shall not be able to point out to you some of the places of interest I wish to show you. There are quite a number of things worth your while to see, and which I think will interest you."

A short distance brought them opposite a handsome brick church, with a tall metal-crested steeple and stained Gothic windows. The space in front was trimly laid off in closely shaven grass plats and circling walks, reached from the smoothly paved street by a short flight of granite steps on either side and in the centre of the square space.

"That is the First Presbyterian church, not long ago completed, and the second one ever built in this county. The old one that was removed to make place for this was the first one." His eyes were traveling over the building, when Ruth asked, because she wished to say something, "Who is its present pastor?"

"Mr. Darcy. But it is said that he expects to resign this charge before very long to accept another further south. He has done very much toward building up the church since he has been here, and his congregation, and in fact everyone who knows him, will part from him with sincere regret. He and his family occupy the little manse on the left of the church—just there." He inclined his head in the direction of the house. Ruth glanced at the two-storied brown cottage, scanning it steadily as they drove past,

then looked down the street along which they were leisurely driving.

The houses on either side were mostly modern structures, with an occasional old landmark sandwiched between them, and many were very handsome. Those on the right side of the street especially had spacious, well-kept lawns in front, tastily arranged in pretty shrubbery and flowers, while over a number of the dooways and frontages ran graceful vines, the foliage of which jealously screened from the summer sun rich clusters of fragrant blossoms.

A little further down they passed into the old Moravian town, where the street began to slope gently downward, and at the foot of which stood a large brick building that in the perspective seemed to bar their further progress.

The sidewalks were notably clean, and here and there well shaded, and now the charm of the ancient street began to appear.

At the end of it, on the left, was a pretty two-storied stuccoed residence with hooded windows and cornices of brown pilasters. Dr. Leslie was driving past it very slowly, so that Ruth might see the beauty of the grounds. A beautiful lawn fell gently downward, through which ran a winding graveled driveway, exquisitely shaded by low-branched elms, white pine and spruce, while two magnificent oaks on either side of the house in front cast their dense shade over a vast breadth of the dark green space. Rustic seats of metal braced their high backs against the lichened trunks of the trees, and large white urns, filled with growing plants, stood near the steeply terraced entrance in front, while half way down the green expanse a gracefully posed

marble figure, life-size and representing "Silence," lent additional and suggestive grace to the scene.

A low fence, sectioning off the lawn from a disused play-ground now given over to beautiful decay, and running parallel with it, was entirely tapestried with English honeysuckle in the most picturesque profusion.

Presently Ruth caught a glimpse of something white and silvery moving about on the green lawn. It was a pair of snow-white pigeons, that strutted cooing in the pensive silence, but suddenly at some disturbing noise flew up and alighted on the shoulder of the silent figure, about which a shaft of sunlight fell, bringing it into bold relief amidst the dreamy twilight which invaded the beautiful place even at this hour.

As they turned into another street and came opposite some large brick buildings which had about them the air and sound of busy life, Dr. Leslie said:

"Here are the Arista Cotton Mill and the Wachovia Flouring Mills, and from the high grade of goods which is made at these places the firm and mills have such a reputation that it is almost impossible to fill the numerous orders which they receive from all sections of the country. The Arista Cotton Mill is one of the largest in the State, and contains about five thousand one hundred and eighty-four spindles and one hundred and eighty looms, and turns out ginghams, plaid, white and colored shirting of the very best grade."

At that moment a whiff of wind bore to them a pungent odor, which though familiar, Ruth did not at first recognize.

"It is gas," said Dr. Leslie, in answer to Ruth's puzzled look; "and here are the gas works to the left, which belong to the owners of the Mills—and besides they have their own fire-pump and waterworks. The Mills are thickly covered with water-pipes and automatic sprinklers. In fact, their Mills and Woollen Factory are supplied with all kinds of modern machinery and conveniences; with ample capital to carry on their business, of course there is no telling what results they will yet achieve. And over there, beyond the gasworks," Dr. Leslie went on, "are the Woollen Mills that turn out a certain high grade of jeans that is almost world renowned for its durability and excellent finish." Ruth looked at him, perhaps a little incredulously, to which Dr. Leslie said, smiling:

"Yes, it may seem a little strange to you that such things should exist right here, but these good people never make any 'blow'—if I may colloquially express it—about anything they have or undertake; one has to find out their good works from others. The firm ship many of their goods to China, Japan and other foreign countries—though they are hardly able to supply the immense home consumption."

This idea was amazing to Ruth, as Dr. Leslie could see from her countenance, and presently she acknowledged as much.

"This firm was the first to introduce electric lights into their mills," he continued; "and you should see the cotton factory especially when lighted up at night. It makes a very brilliant sight."

"I can imagine so," said Ruth. "It is so

large and has so many windows. I think it must be very trying to work all day amidst the incessant whirl of the machinery and breathe the lint and oil-tainted atmosphere, as those factory girls do."

"Yes, as a rule, I believe the condition of the factory girl is a pitiful one," said Dr. Leslie; "but here, I have reason to believe, is an exception to the general rule. The best and wisest efforts are put forth by the employers to brighten and make cheerful the busy lives of these girls. Now, over there," he added, pointing his whip to a row of brick cottages, "are the houses occupied by those who work in these factories. They pay a small rent for them, and the landlords keep them in good repair. There are others, on another street, which you cannot see from here, but they are equally as neat and comfortable."

Ruth turned and looked at him, just then, with a curious little smile which he could not interpret. "Excuse me, but isn't it somewhere in this neighborhood that you promised to show me the first building which was erected in this old town—or have we passed it?"

"No, we have not. I am glad you reminded me of it, since I had quite forgotten to point it out to you. It is over there, to the right, and quite hidden under those clumps of trees," he said, indicating the place with his whip.

"It was built by Gottfried Aust in 1772, and many years used for a pottery. All kinds of articles for domestic use, tiles for covering houses, tile stoves, and many ornamental articles were once manufactured there. Clay pipes are still made there. As many as fifteen hun-

dred are made a day, and shipped North as far as Baltimore and Philadelphia, and as far South as Mobile, Alabama."

"From its general appearance, I am sure no one would be inclined to dispute the statement that it is the oldest house in the place," said Ruth, looking curiously at the quaint old building.

Seeing that Ruth was interested in this ancient landmark, he said:

"There is an old house on Buffalo Creek, in this county, which is probably the oldest in the State. It was built before the Revolutionary War, but the exact year of its building is not known. It is a log house, about eighteen by twenty feet in size, and is still in a good state of preservation. It was built by a man who had a narrow escape from the Indians. It seems that his father's house was attacked one night by the Indians, but by some strategem he managed to escape with his wife and three children to the woods. Here he concealed one of the boys in a hollow log, while he and his wife and other two children fled to a fort which then stood on or near what is the site of Old Town. The boy left concealed in the log was rescued, and is said to have been the one who built the house. He owned an immense area of land, and tradition has it that he once gave six hundred acres of land near Walnut Cove for a single-barreled shot-gun. In those times it seems that guns were more valuable than land," he said, smiling.

"Is the old fort you alluded to at Old Town still standing?" asked Ruth. "If it is, I should like very much to visit it some day."

"No, it was torn down about eighteen years ago, and some of the best timbers brought here and used in erecting the residence of a gentleman in another part of the city. The beams used for this purpose are sweetgum and oak and are of different sizes. There are a quantity of large, rude hand-wrought nails in the frames used in the construction of this residence—nails made by the early Moravian settlers, about one hundred and thirty-five years ago. Now, as there is no chance of your seeing the old fort as it stood, the next best thing, I would suggest, is for you to see some of its historic timbers in Mr Worth's residence. I know Mr. Worth well. He is a prosperous tobacconist in our city, and is a high-toned, public-spirited, Christian gentleman. I am sure he will take great pleasure in showing you these relics or timbers from the old Indian fort."

"I shall be glad to avail myself of your suggestion," said Ruth.

Dr. Leslie touched up Hector, and presently they turned into the main thoroughfare and drove down the long street, shaded by stately ancient elms. Here all was so perfectly peaceful and quiet, that Ruth was penetrated by the spell of this quaint and beautiful place. It was such a pretty illusion of hers to think that they were driving into a veritable land of rest. Every sense seemed in perfect harmony with her archaic surroundings, and somehow a sweet peace stole into her heart, and her face melted in an unconscious smile. She wondered if her guardian shared her peculiar feelings. At that moment he glanced at her flushed face, and was pleased to see the dream-like look of happiness

that had come into her grave, sad eyes, but he felt no inclination to interrupt her sweet revery.

As they reached the Square, which was surrounded by a cordon of rugged elms, intermingled with magnificent, silvery sycamores, the sun was falling aslant to the west, but through the interweaving boughs spears of sunlight filtered down, making exquisite lace-work of shade on the soft green turf. In the center was a fountain, which was idle now, but the bronze storks with drooping heads seemed to keep perpetual vigil within the circular basin of tranquil water, and suggestively hold themselves in readiness for duty at a moment's notice. The radiating aisles intersecting the Square were filled with a gleaming whiteness, dappled here and there with little flickering shadows.

On the right, facing the Square, was the Widows' House, the first substantial brick building erected in the town, and afterwards enlarged with the addition of a wooden structure. It had been formerly used as a Brothers' House. These facts Dr. Leslie briefly rceounted to Ruth as they drove slowly down the street.

"It is said that the Widows' House had its ghostly visitant," he continued with a smile, "as most old houses are said to have, but of course none of the present inhabitants have ever seen his ghostship, and even refuse to believe the superstition; but still they like to tell the story to the curious who are fond of turning over the dust of years and peeping into past mysteries."

"I think I am curious enough to want to hear it, too," said Ruth, and she raised her sweet questioning eyes to his face.

"Then I will tell you," he said. "That is, as much as I know of it. The legend of 'The Little Red Man,' as it is called, was written up for the Century several years ago, and the author's mother then occupied rooms at the Widows' House. The story goes that a workman, while excavating for its cellar, was killed by a rock crushing out his life. At the time he was attired in a red shirt and skull cap, and one of the inmates of the building long years afterwards declared she met him on the staircase, sure."

"Sure?" repeated Ruth, so earnestly that Dr. Leslie laughed.

"So says the legend," he said. "But we'll drive further down to the old hotel, or 'tavern,' as it was familiarly termed long years ago; and where, too, a veritable ghost is said to have made its appearance more than half a century past; and besides, it is a place of great interest to strangers by virtue of the tragedies that have occurred beneath its roof; and the fact that there is a room held sacred in the old building where George Washington slept during his visit here in May, 1791. It was the social center of the town then, and the customary resort of the burghers, who regularly congregated about the large fireplace of the public room in winter, or on the long veranda in summer, to discuss the affairs of the place, and general news, as they smoked. The first inn, which occupied the same site, was burned in 1784; and the present hotel was built the same year. It was leased to parties who were required to sign a written document pledging themselves 'to be agreeable and polite to all strangers, to keep an entirely clean and inviting house of entertainment, to watch the

domestics carefully that they may be polite and obliging and not demand an extra gratuity, and in case they were found guilty of asking for money, to dismiss them without ceremony.' They were also required 'not to allow gambling, fighting, swearing, immoral conduct or the assembling of minors on Sunday, or to permit the use of spirituous liquors to persons intoxicated or any excess of drinking on the premises.' After the Academy became a success, examination day was the great event of the year. As there were no railway facilities, the wealthy Southern planters came in elegant coaches with a train of colored servants and fine horses—the like of which has never been seen since the Civil War. The large hotel yard would be literally packed with carriages. Indeed, it would be difficult to describe those times when Southern aristocracy was at its zenith, and nowhere else at that time could be found so great a collection of wealth, beauty, all the courtly graces and chivalric bearing which characterized Southerners in ante bellum days."

"It seems a pity that the glory of those old days has departed," said Ruth. "I imagine it would be delightful to recall them. But really it sounds more like some pretty fairy story or romance than a reality."

"No, it is all true," said Dr. Leslie; and just then they drew up in front of the old tavern, which, with its four quaint buildings, presented a patch of warm color in the fading sunshine. Dr. Leslie and Ruth dismounted, and after obtaining permission from one of the tenants, who occupied the George Washington room, they began to explore the rambling halls and chambers.

Dr. Leslie called Ruth's attention particularly to the red bricks of immense size; the walls as thick as a feudal castle; the queer, saddle roof with dormer windows; the chimneys with their tall mantel shelves, and the immense fireplaces and the quaint kitchen paved with blocks of stone.

The voluble tenant who conducted them over the building seemed to take great pride in exhibiting the celebrated apartment which he occupied—the George Washington room—and giving bits of its history, as he did to the hundreds of curious visitors. It was in the main building, on the second floor, and opened on a large square hall which led out to the long veranda in front. It was about eighteen feet square, with low pitched ceiling and the floor made of thick oak planks, twenty inches wide, hewn from the forest trees and slick with the tread of many feet. The walls in the room were plastered and kept clean by whitewash. The small windows, four in number, were deep embrasures, and about four feet from the floor. The large fireplace across the corner of the room had been reduced in size, but the tall mantel shelf remained as it was originally fashioned. The two doors, many-panelled, both opened on the same hall, one of which, however, was temporarily closed with curtains.

Ruth lingered here, quite reluctant to leave, asking the readily responsive tenant many questions about the room which had been occupied one hundred years ago by the first President of the United States. She was curious, too, to see the quaint, old-fashioned spinnet or piano, the first one ever brought to town and the one

which furnished music at the President's reception given him here. But the man informed her that it was in the Museum near by, with some other fragmentary but treasured relics associated with that memorable event, and by applying to the person in charge she would have no difficulty in gaining admittance.

"There is a movement on foot," said Dr. Leslie to Ruth, "looking to the purchase of this old hotel, tear away the present hotel building with the exception of the original structure, preserve the Washington apartment intact, fit up other portions for the use of relics, and make a local museum of it. I think it is a good idea, and I hope to see it carried out."

"Yes, I am sure it is," said Ruth, as they passed out on the veranda. "But somehow I can't help wishing that this old tavern with all its antiquity and associations could be restored to its former grandeur. Why can't it be, I wonder?" persisted Ruth, half sadly.

"Oh, that wouldn't do at all," laughed Dr. Leslie. "If we were to spend all our time restoring the crumbling ruins of our ancestors, why, I fear, we should never make any progress whatever; and besides all lovers of antiquity and relic hunters would be fettered and manacled, so to speak, and be deprived of an opportunity to make investigations. Upon the whole, I believe that I prefer that things should remain as they are. But let us walk to the other end of the veranda," he went on in the same light tone, "and I will tell you some other interesting facts connected with this old tavern, but you must not allow it to affect you morbidly," he said looking at her, smiling.

"Oh, no; but—" she hesitated; "yes, I will be glad to hear it," she returned, recovering something of her cheerfulness. "I should like to hear all about it." They sauntered leisurely the length of the long veranda.

"It was in this hotel that Peter Ney, supposed by many to have been Napoleon's Marshal Ney of France, used to come, while he resided in Davie County in 1840 or '41, and attracted crowds who stared in open-mouthed wonder at his thrilling feats of sword play and other martial exercises. Then there was an European chemist who drifted here and took up his abode at this hotel, bought property, planted an orchard and vineyard, and made himself at home among the people—though reticent about his former history. One evening, in 1857—I do not remember the month—while making some chemical experiments, a terrific explosion occurred in his room, which tore through the walls, shattered the windows, flung the piano in the adjoining parlor across the room, and killed the experimenter, mangling him terribly. Tradition says that his burial in the dusk of the evening, coupled with the circumstances, was very impressive."

Ruth glanced meditatively round.

"Shall I go on?" Dr. Leslie asked, laughing.

"Oh, yes, certainly," she said eagerly. "I am not at all nervous."

"Half a century ago, so tradition runs on, a gentleman came to this hotel and registered under an assumed name. The proprietor was kind and pleasant. The gentleman was sick, and in a day or so was found to be afflicted with smallpox, and so was removed to a house on the edge

of town and a nurse provided. He grew rapidly worse, and when he found he must die, he sent for the proprietor of the hotel, who, unfortunately, did not reach him before he died. The old man was greatly troubled, and wondered for days who his strange guest was and whence he came. Sometime afterward one of the female servants complained that while cleaning the room the sick man had occupied at the hotel, his face had appeared to her. The proprietor scolded her for such superstition; but after repeated shrieks of fear and declarations that he was really present, the proprietor decided to investigate for himself. The result was that the uncanny visitor met him upon the threshold of the room, told his real name and place of residence and desired that his wife should be apprised of his death, then disappeared and has never been seen since. The grave old Moravian, pale and collected, would not tell his strange experience, but wrote to the address named, received a reply from the wife and sent all his effects home. It is said that the old gentleman never liked to talk about the incident, which he declared to be literally true."

"How ghostly!" said Ruth. "But I hope you will not blame my frankness in telling you that I believe the whole thing was a piece of gross fabrication of the servant; or perhaps she dreamed it, and it seemed so realistic that she believed it herself, and so told it for a fact," Ruth added, with such demonstration of earnestness that Dr. Leslie laughed heartily.

"Oh, no, I shall not quarrel with you for your candor," he said. "Undoubtedly the real facts have been vividly colored, as such things gen-

erally are after the lapse of so long a time and with repeated repetition, too. Now, I will tell you one other little incident, and then we'll go." He took out his watch. "Ah, it is time we are going now. However, I can tell you as we go out. But come with me, please, to this part of the veranda, and I will show you the window in the room where, it is said, a man from a distance, while sick and suffering from some temporary mania, or by design, during the absence of his attendant, threw himself from and was instantly killed. You see it is some distance to the ground," pointing toward the place.

Ruth cast a doubtful glance up at the window, and then at the ground.

As they turned away and descended the steps, Dr. Leslie said, "Well, that's all, and winds up the pitiful list of tragedies that tell of the strange complications of human lives."

Driving back in the direction they had come, he rounded the lower side of the Square, past a row of quaint red brick houses, with tiled roofs mellowed with age, and their gabled fronts bathed in the rosy glow of the waning sun; past the Sisters' House, another old-fashioned brick edifice, covered with tiles, some of which were curled up in brittle decay, while here and there others had fallen away altogether; on past the stately silent Academy, over one side of which a Virginia creeper ran rampant in riotous profusion and then reached out to embrace the church adjoining—the church whose foundation dates back to 1765—and with a town clock in its gable. A little further on they came to the head of the avenue, and Dr. Leslie stopped his horse. The iron railing across the entrance way prevented vehicles from driving through.

"I am sorry that we'll not have time to dismount and go through the Avenue and graveyard too," he said, glancing toward the sun. "You can see but a small part of it from this point. Some day you and Mrs. Grayson can come down together and spend an hour or two here, and at the same time include Woodland Cemetery, which occupies that elevation across the ravine to the right." He indicated the direction with a sweep of his whip.

They lingered a few minutes longer to enjoy the magical effect of the setting sun upon the cedar arched walk of such dazzling whiteness, and where the dusky shadows were creeping and fast blotting out the translucent gold. The effect was indescribable.

"There seems to be something in the atmosphere and cloistered stillness of this place that helps me," said Dr. Leslie, quietly, as he turned his horse's head toward home.

Ruth made no direct reply. At that moment she was looking up at a large square mansion of brick, built more than a century ago, but apparently as substantial as of old. It was rigidly outlined against the dark-blue summer sky, across which lazily floated white billowy clouds, ever shifting into various forms as they advanced towards the misty horizon.

"The first Moravian Bishop's house," explained Dr. Leslie, as he musingly followed her upward gaze, "and it still retains much of its local celebrity and interest for strangers. It has been modernized a little, interiorly, yet contains a few remnants of its departing glory. In the low-ceiled dining-room there is an immense fireplace with a queer chimney-piece, and an old

fashioned crane that still swings in its capacious jambs. I don't suppose you ever saw one," he said, turning to her smiling, "for it is more of a novelty than our grandmother's flax-wheels, which is such a fashionable fad now-a-days."

"No, I've never seen a crane—the machine you refer to," said Ruth, "but I've seen one or two old-time flax-wheels." Then she glanced about her, was silent, and for the next few moments surrendered herself to the charm of her surroundings.

On the left of the short street down which they drove, they passed the ruinous traces of a greenhouse, with its wrecked machinery and rank growth of weeds, flowers and vines densely interwoven, and the original designs of the flower beds hopelessly blotted out. From out the tangled, fragrant mass came the pensive chirp of innumerable crickets and other insect life.

Adjoining the ruins of the once beautiful greenhouse and on the corner, past which they now turned again into the thoroughfare, rose the tall, somber-looking dwelling where the owner of the ruined gardens formerly lived. He was long since dead, and the ancient mansion wore an air of gloom and disoccupation. However, upon the stone parapet of the terraced steps which led up from the street to the narrow courtyard in front, the couchant bronze lion, mastiff and greyhound still kept silent guard.

On that side of the building running along Main Street, the lower rooms, which were formerly used as stores and shops, were now securely closed and shuttered, except the upper end, where job printing was being done.

Over the doorway leading to a hall between

these shuttered rooms, was the name of the late proprietor in large, raised gilt letters.

Dr. Leslie pointed out other places of historic interest to Ruth along the way, all of which bore the solemn impress of antiquity, and had an air of indescribable serenity.

Many of the houses on this street had little balconies and porticos extending out over the narrow sidewalk, and all had their usual environments of beautiful flowers and graceful drapery of vines.

Presently Dr. Leslie turned suddenly into a little side street, and driving a short distance drew up in front of a pretty but old-fashioned house, with the most picturesque surroundings. As he did so, Ruth glanced at him as if she were surprised, but said nothing.

"This is where my sister Rachel lives," he said with one of his humorous smiles, and answering Ruth's questioning eyes. Mrs. Grayson charged me with a package for her, and according to promise I must deliver it before I return home."

While they awaited at the gate without alighting, Miss Rachel emerged from the front porch as neat and prim as if she had made special preparation for their coming, and shaking out her skirts, hurried down to the gate to greet them.

"How are you both? Get right down and come in," she said in an unusually cordial voice, extending a hand to each. "I've not been to supper yet, but Mary is getting it ready, and will have it on the table in a few moments. It will be no trouble at all," she went on, as if the matter admitted of a doubt, "and I shall be glad to have you."

"Thank you, Rachel; not this afternoon. Helen is expecting us back to tea, and I've no doubt is wondering now what has detained us beyond her regular supper hour. She asked me to call by and hand you this package—said the note enclosed would explain about it."

Miss Rachel took the little flat, square package and carefully pressed it between her fingers, as if to ascertain its contents. It yielded softly to the touch as she fingered it.

"Oh, yes," she said mystically. "Much obliged—all right—tell Helen I'll let her hear from me to-morrow," she added, following out her own thoughts.

Dr. Leslie and Ruth smiled, and, as they turned to go, Miss Rachel pressed effusive invitations, upon Ruth especially, to come to see her very soon.

They had left the delightfully quiet Moravian town behind them and crossed First Street, when they came upon quite a festive scene upon their right.

"A lawn party, I suppose," said Dr. Leslie, and Ruth followed the slight gesture of his whip with a glance.

Groups of ladies and children were gathered and flitting about upon a beautiful, spacious lawn that rolled slightly downward on either side of the handsome two-storied dwelling with its double porticos, whilst the lawn itself was shaded with magnificent trees and surrounded by a wealth of flowering shrubs, now in the glory of their blossoming beauty. The whole place had a charmingly festal air, for amidst the showers of light and blossom and perfume, the sound of rippling laughter and gay girls' voices mingled,

as they tended their snow-white tables and gracefully served their dainty wares to the stream of visitors continually coming and going.

"One rarely sees a prettier sight than that," said Dr. Leslie, as they passed on. "'It is like some pretty day-dream, some melody that is sweetly played in time.'"

"Whose home is it, where the entertainment is being held?" asked Ruth, her eyes softly alight with the enjoyment she felt in the pretty scene.

"Mr. Sallade, a popular young lawyer in this city, and a very clever gentleman he is, too, affable and courteous to everyone. There he is now, on the right sidewalk, going home from his office."

Ruth followed the direction of his glance and saw a rather tall, slender young man, with a clean-shaven face, save a slight moustache, and his eyes, which met Dr. Leslie's fully and frankly for an instant as he returned his friendly greeting, were quite dark and very bright.

"How do, Mr. Sallade?" Dr. Leslie greeted him. "Hope you are well, sir."

"Quite so, thank you. Glad to see you home again, doctor."

The gentlemen raised their hats simultaneously and bowed.

"Thank you, thank you," repeated Dr. Leslie. "It's always pleasant to get back again, too, even after a short absence." Dr. Leslie sent his voice after him, for they had passed one another during the brief salutation, and Mr. Sallade was walking at his usual brisk gait.

When they reached the Court House Square, the strains from the air of some familiar old

song, full of tender pathos, came to them on the evening breeze. It touched Ruth like an awakened echo from the silent land. It was faulty in rhyme and meter, but the lay was indescribably sweet because of its association with memories of days that were past. When they drew near they saw a group of negro musicians who, with banjo, guitar and harmonicon had set the warm air astir with the sad, weird strains they evoked from their instruments, and drawn a crowd of rapt listeners around them. For the moment the plaintive cadence saddened Ruth, and her lovely eyes were full of the silent sympathetic passion that stirred her soul.

"Negroes are born musical geniuses, and if their latent talent were developed, they would make the finest musicians in the world," said Dr. Leslie, looking toward the motley group congregated on the corner. "Many of them have splendid voices, too, and no Southerner can listen even to the broken chant of an old darkey crooning a weird song of the plantation times without his heart being softened. They can suit music to any mood and purpose. And Dixie—why no one can sing Dixie with such passion and pathos as the darkey. I like to hear him sing it. Ah, that dear old song will never die, for it was, as some one has so beautifully put it, 'the lullaby and the requiem of the proudest nation of the earth that ever died so young.'"

Ruth was silent the next few minutes, and the vehicle rolled smoothly on its way through the gay, bustling streets, and when they finally stopped and Dr. Leslie helped her out, he said:

"I dare say Mrs. Grayson is wondering what has become of us."

Then to Virgil: "Groom and feed Hector well, Virgil." He handed the reins to that ever watchful functionary, then joined Ruth, who stood waiting for him on the steps.

"I don't know how to thank you enough, Dr. Leslie, for the pleasure you have given me this afternoon," she said, smiling and brightening; "but I want to assure you that I haven't enjoyed anything so much since—" she stopped suddenly, and her voice half choked with tears.

"Don't speak of it, child," he said hurriedly, in his frank winning way. "It was a great pleasure to me to take you, and I shall be most happy to do so again."

Ruth felt the singular fascination of her guardian's power, which instantly soothed and quieted her, but she did not understand it.

He took her hand, and moved by common consent, they slowly ascended the steps together and in silence entered the house.

CHAPTER IX.

Nellie was on the watch for her uncle's approach.

"Oh, Uncle Ralph, I am so glad that you and Cousin Ruth have come. Just guess who's here. Of course Cousin Ruth can't, because she doesn't know him."

"The visitor is a gentleman, then. Well, I suppose it is my friend, Dr. Seaton," he said amusedly, as he turned to the sitting-room.

"Oh, don't go in there, Uncle Ralph; mamma and Dr. Seaton are waiting for you in the dining-room," she said hastily, "so you and Cousin Ruth come right on."

Ruth noticed that there was a most cordial greeting between the two men, and as Mrs. Grayson mentioned Dr. Seaton's name he came forward and she presented him.

Now and then Ruth's soft glance swept over the face of their visitor as he listened with attentive interest to Dr. Leslie, and she saw that his manner was quiet, easy and full of unfailing dignity and self-confident grace.

The conversation drifted from one familiar topic to another, Ruth listening with interest, but almost in silence, and when they finally rose from the table and returned to the sitting-room, the long twilight had ended, and the rooms were brightly lighted. From the first Dr. Seaton was charmed with Ruth, and they were soon talking as if they were old acquaintances.

Near where they were sitting stood a pretty metal table, upon which was a superb gold-lined bowl filled with exquisite pond and lotus lilies.

Ruth reached over and took out one of the half-blown pink flowers, and holding it up by its smooth, rubber-like stem, said:

"Isn't it lovely? I do not know any flower so beautiful as the lily, unless it is the rose. Those exquisitely delicate Caroline Testont roses in the vase on the mantel quite rival these lilies if any flower can. Where do these lilies grow?" she asked.

"These, I suppose, came from Dr. Balbec's pond, near the city. He has acquired much local reputation by his success in rearing magnificent lilies, lotuses and other rare water plants."

"Is he the gentleman who has *Victoria Regia* growing in the open air? I heard Mrs. Grayson talking with some lady visitors of this wonderful flower, and I intended to ask her about it afterwards, but neglected to do so."

She restored the lily to the bowl, then with the most charming naivete turned to him and asked, "Won't you tell me about it, please?"

"Certainly, I will take pleasure in giving you what information I have upon the subject," he said, smiling. "But I dare say you know quite as much about it as I do. You have no doubt read the story of the immense trouble and expense at which a living plant of the *Victoria Regia* was transferred to the Royal Gardens at Kew; and how for a long time this royal plant was studied, and a special aquarium prepared for it." He paused and looked at her as if waiting for her to affirm his assertion.

"I may have read it, but I should not object to hearing it repeated," she said smiling.

"Well, after the aquarium was prepared the

gardener was able to keep up a temperature of 98 degrees F.; then at last, to the great joy of the botanical and horticultural world, the plant bloomed. This success made way for another at the Exposition in Philadelphia, in 1876, and since then the ambition of many lovers of beautiful acquatic plants has been directed to the accomplishment of the grand feat elsewhere. The magnificent leaves, five in number, are surrounded by a modest flower of pure white. One of the largest of the leaves grown in Dr. Balbec's pond measured sixty inches in diameter, and bore the weight of a little girl weighing 65 pounds, and in this attitude the whole plant was photographed."

Ruth rose, crossed the room, and taking a cabinet size photograph from among quite a number of others which lay upon the table, came back and handed it to him. "Is that the picture you have reference to?"

"Yes; the same," he said, looking down at it. "It is Captain Gilbert's little daughter." Then he handed it back to her and went on: "The flower has a very short life, measured only by two days. On the second day one was plucked and placed in a parlor, where, side by side with magnificent red, blue and white lilies, *eichorinas* or water hyacinths and water poppies, it reigned supreme and went through a remarkable transformation. The outer white petals gently opened, getting wider and wider as each layer separated, then assumed a delicate pink."

"And do these lilies grow here in the open air?" Ruth asked, wonderingly, her soft eyes glowing.

"Yes, in open ponds, right in this place." he said, laughing. "Marvelous, isn't it?"

"Indeed, I think it is. Do you remember where the plant was first discovered?" she asked, still interested in the discussion.

"In the upper Amazon, and named in honor of Queen Victoria." Then, after a short silence he turned to her and said, "Won't you play and sing something, Miss Arnold? Before you returned from your drive this afternoon, Mrs. Grayson told me about your wonderful musical gift, and I shall be most happy to hear you."

Ruth took her seat at the instrument, and, as was her habit when playing without notes, rapidly swept her agile fingers up and down the keys, then suddenly dashed into one of Rubenstein's most popular compositions. She played pieces from the great masters of the past as well as the modern ones.

Dr. Leslie, who had been sitting just without the window of the veranda talking to Mrs. Grayson when Ruth began to play, now involuntarily entered the room, strangely attracted by her music, and seating himself near the piano listened as one entranced.

Ruth's whole personality seemed completely absorbed in the eloquent tide of melody which rose and fell and vibrated in rippling waves and floated far out on the evening breeze. When she presently ceased playing and looked round, Dr. Leslie stood beside her, his handsome face glowing.

"I have not words to express my sincere admiration and enjoyment, Ruth," he said. "I was not prepared for this. You have indeed remarkable musical powers."

Dr. Seaton, though outwardly not so demonstrative as her guardian, showered praises upon her that made her smile gratefully up into his face.

"Thank you both," she said; "I am always glad when one really appreciates my music."

"Don't you sing, too, Ruth?" Dr. Leslie asked, steadily regarding the bewitching face.

She turned to the piano again, and with a sort of rhythmic motion glided her fingers over the keys.

"What shall I sing?" she asked, glancing round. As neither Dr. Seaton nor Mrs. Grayson suggested anything, Dr. Leslie said:

"Some pretty old Scottish ballad. I have always had a tender and sincere regard for them."

"How would you like me sing 'The Lass o' Gowrie,' or 'The Dowie Dens of Yarrow'?" she asked.

"Oh, by all means—either one or both of them, if you will. They are great favorites of mine," said Dr. Leslie.

When her rich voice burst upon them her glorious notes rang out with melody beyond all praise. Her listeners sat hushed and breathless, as she sang piece after piece, and the music rippled lightly, merrily and joyfully through the room.

Her sweet voice dropped into the rhythm of the music, and she sang with all the abandon of one who loses herself and forgets everything in his glowing inspiration.

When she rose, Dr. Leslie went up to her and with admiring, wondering eyes looking down

into hers, said: "Ruth, thank you. We have enjoyed a double treat this evening. Such a voice you have! It is like the tones of the finest Stradivarius. It is incomparable."

He was passionately fond of music, and he could not help giving vent to his admiration of her superb and wonderful gift.

The evening had passed delightfully and rapidly by, and when Dr. Seaton rose to go he said to Mrs. Grayson, "I am greatly indebted to you for affording me this opportunity of spending a most charming evening," at the same time extending her his hand while his glance rested on Ruth.

Dr. Leslie followed his guest into the hall, and a few minutes later when he came back into the sitting-room, Ruth had vanished to her own room.

CHAPTER XII.

The cheerful peals of the church bells were ringing throughout the city, bidding the people to turn aside from the busy cares, sordid thoughts and perplexing anxieties of their every-day lives, and, in remembrance of the love and sacrifice revealed to the human race, attend upon the sanctuary of God this lovely Sabbath morning, so full of glad repose and suggestiveness of spiritual sweetness.

"Do you think you are feeling strong enough to attend church this morning?" said a voice behind Ruth. She looked quickly round and saw the smiling face of her guardian.

"Oh—excuse me—how you startled me, Dr. Leslie. Yes, thank you," she replied in her soft, silvery voice, smiling, "I've only a headache. Just a slight one."

"Only a headache," he repeated; "this hot weather is trying on you, and you need a tonic in the way of cooler breezes. I think I shall have you and Mrs. Grayson off to the mountains without further delay. How soon do you think you can be ready?"

Ruth laughed. "Oh, I'm ready now, only I shouldn't like to start on the Sabbath, you know. I believe, however, that Mrs. Grayson intends leaving next week."

"Well, which church do you wish to attend to-day, or have you a preference? Mr. Darcy has gone to fill an appointment at one of his churches in a village near by, but there will be services in several other churches whose pastors are not absent on their vacation, and at any one

of them you will be likely to hear an excellent discourse. We are singularly blessed in our city clergymen, for they are divines of unusual intellectual power and spirituality, and wield a vast moral influence in the community. It gives me no little gratification to say that our city churches, as a rule, have, in a rare degree, more broad-hearted sympathy, more unity of purpose, and more genuine brotherly love for one another, than, so far as I have an opportunity of observing and finding out, churches of different denominations in other communities."

"That must be a very pleasant state of things, both for the pastor and the people, I imagine," returned Ruth with sweet gravity. Just then her eyes fell upon the paper which Dr. Leslie had been reading when he entered the room, and she took it up and mechanically read the name on the title page—The Sunday School Times. Then smoothing it out in a half absent sort of way, she slowly and carefully folded and handed it to him.

"No, you keep it and read it if you like. It contains some very admirable articles which may interest you. There is one especially, which, though short, is both suggestive and interesting to me. Let me find it for you, and you can read it when you wish."

He took the paper and ran his eyes rapidly over its pages. "Ah, here it is," he said, and held the paper towards her, pointing to the article in question.

"Suppose you read it to me," she said prettily.

"Certainly, I will gladly do so." Dr. Leslie resumed the paper and read aloud the title of the

article: "Which is the most profitable to the Christian worker—failure or success?" he read slowly, looked up, then went on: "No doubt both are useful; and in such proportion as God adjusts they are exactly suited to our need. All failures would so discourage us, that we should turn back from the work; whereas, if we never had anything but success, we should become proud and self-sufficient. Discouragements are useful in keeping us humbled, and low before God in a spirit of dependence and prayer; while successes inspire and stimulate us in the work, and give us boldness to go forward in new and more difficult enterprises."

Ruth sat still, listening very attentively to the cadence of his rich, musical voice. When he had finished reading, he said, "Now let me illustrate a case in point. I recently met a lady of this city—a lady who belongs to one of the many circles of King's Daughters here, and who, with quite a number of other members of the same Circle, has been doing a great deal to build a home for working-women—and she told me of their trials in getting their work started. At first they felt quite equal to it, and so sure were they that others would see it in the same light they did, that when they went to solicit money from some of the wealthy business men of the city with which to build their Home, they had no doubt of an immediate response. But they felt greatly staggered and discouraged when they found that their expected patrons kindly and politely held themselves excused. This discouragement drove them to seek guidance of God, and there they found strength. Most unexpectedly, a part of the money came to them

from other directions than they had anticipated, one benevolent gentleman giving them a handsome donation as a memorial to his sainted wife, in whose honor the Home is to be called—'The Delphine Home for Working Women'—Delphine being his wife's Christian name. Now this money is really of more use to them, coming in this way, than if they had obtained it in their own way."

"Surely money never seems so golden as when it is used in some such way as this," Ruth said, taking the paper her guardian handed her and refolding it.

"Cousin Ruth, you are a King's Daughter, too, aren't you?" asked Nellie, who had entered the room while her uncle was talking and went and stood beside Ruth, resting her arm affectionately upon her shoulder. As she spoke, she bent down and touched the little silver cross pinned on the bosom of Ruth's dress. "I just came to tell you," she went on, apologetically, "that mamma says that it is very nearly time to get ready for church; but Uncle Ralph was talking when I came in, so I waited for him to get through. We are going to the Centenary Church, where Mr. Norwood preaches, and the first bell has already rung."

Ruth rose at once and took up The Times.

"Where have you been all the morning, Nellie?" she asked, moving toward the door with Nellie still clinging caressingly about her as if reluctant to let her go.

"Why, to Sunday School; didn't you know? I go every Sunday, if I'm not sick. I am in Mrs. Wesley's class in the infant room, where there are ever so many children, but when I

am older she will put me in the big room—the church, you know, where Major Brice, our Superintendent, stays. Mrs. Wesley tells us so many beautiful Bible stories every Sunday, from a big picture which she puts on the easel; then we have music and singing, and lessons and books—story-books, you know, and Sunday School papers, too. Oh, it's ever so nice to go to Sunday School, and next Sunday I want you to go and take a class in our room. I heard Mrs. Wesley tell Major Brice this morning that she wanted some more teachers, and I just know she'll let you teach in her room. Now, won't you go, Cousin Ruth?" she asked, looking appealingly into her face. "Promise, or I shan't let you go," holding her fast and trying to bar the way.

"Yes, thank you, I will be delighted to go," said Ruth, laughing. "Not as a teacher, however, but as a pupil myself."

Though a breeze was stirring, it was languorously warm, and the blue of the far-away unfathomable sky paled in the unbroken splendor of the fervid sun.

There were a few people in carriages and many on foot in the broad street where the sun shone with such glittering glare, wending their way to church, and Dr. Leslie and Mrs. Grayson constantly acknowledged the salutations of their acquaintances as they passed, who looked with inquiring eyes at Ruth. She seemed totally unconscious of their inquisitive glances and went on talking composedly to her guardian. Groups of prettily attired, bright-faced children on their way from Sunday School flitted past them. Here and there they met neatly-dressed, white-capped

nurse maids loitering homeward, or sitting upon some shady door-step, flirting promiscuously with their beaux, while their little charges in their pretty carriages, when not asleep amused themselves as best they could, unheeded and quite forgotten.

As they reached the next intersecting street, a small pony-cart, drawn by a beautiful black Shetland pony and driven by a small boy with a bright, handsome face, drove past them.

At sight of Ruth, the little fellow, trimly attired in a white-flannel sailor suit and blue tie, raised his straw hat, bowed and smiled in a charmingly naive manner.

"Cousin Ruth, isn't that just the cutest little pony you ever saw?" asked Nellie. "Jerold's uncle gave it to him on his birthday, because he thinks so much of him. I think it was ever so nice in his uncle, don't you?" glancing significantly at her Uncle Ralph. "I want mamma to give me one just like it. Jerold's pony is named Bob, but if I had one I should name him—let me see—well, what would you name him, Cousin Ruth?"

"Really I don't know; but I believe I'd wait until I got one, and then try to find a suitable name for him. What is the little boy's name? He has such a sweet face."

"Jerold Berkley," answered Nellie, promptly. "I thought you knew. He is such a good little boy, too, Cousin Ruth, for he goes to church and Sunday School every Sunday."

"If that is the limit of your standard for guaging one's excellence, Nellie, I'm afraid you fall sadly short of the requirement," said her mother, smiling. "But Jerold Berkley is indeed an un-

usually good child, and his whole nature seems to have been chastened and purified through his long suffering."

Just then a short, thick-set gentleman, apparently about thirty-eight or forty years, with a kind, strong face, came opposite them across the street. His dark hair, mustache and chin whiskers were sprinkled with gray, and the gaze of the blue eyes from under the slightly drooping eyelids was firm and clear, while from his whole personality eminated an aroma of goodness and kindness of heart, which were characteristic of him.

"Oh, there's Cousin Joe!" exclaimed Nellie, in a perfect fever of enthusiasm as soon as she saw him, and she would have darted off and joined him, but her mother laid her hand upon her arm to restrain her. "Mr. Joe Mosby," said Dr. Leslie, in a low tone to Ruth. "One of the cleverest and best of men." Just as he called the name the owner looked quickly in their direction, as if he had been addressed, and at the same time the two men smiled, touched their hats and bowed.

The crowd perceptibly increased as they drew near the church, and Nellie chatted on until they had reached the steps of the facade with its ornamental terra-cotta railing, which gave the building a very imposing look. Here she ceased talking, involuntarily, and despite her eagerness to stop and speak with her Cousin Joe, she quietly followed the usher up the long aisles of the spacious church to one of the front pews, where he seated them. When the slight commotion which their entrance had ocasioned subsided, Ruth glanced about her, making mental notes of one kind and another.

Never would she forget that Sunday morning. The peaceful church with its long galleries filled, as were the auditorium and the annex in rear of the chancel, with unfamiliar faces; the rapid fluttering of fans; the light, cool toilets of the ladies, pleasantly mingled with the sombre garb of the gentlemen; the bright flowers upon the altar; the crimson and purple light streaming in through the richly stained, half-opened windows; the calm dignity and reverential bearing of the minister, whose sweet benevolent face was a living sermon in itself—a sermon more eloquent than was ever any sermon spoken from a pulpit. It was all very impressive and sympathetic and resting to her mind. Gradually her thoughts were diverted from her surroundings and her heart seemed lifted as into a realm of ineffable peace and serenity, while she was conscious of a Presence that calmed and strengthened her.

At that moment from the great organ in the gallery over the entrance way, came a low, moaning sound as of mighty waters afar off, whose hoarse roar was harmonized and softened by the distance; but coming near, the deep thunder tones gained in volume and power and swelled grandly and triumphantly upon the air. Ruth sat motionless, breathless, for the time unconscious of all things save the magic tones of the great organ, which seemed as a voice appealing to her out of the unfathomable Beyond and she was powerless to respond.

The minister began his discourse, and it was one calculated to do much good. The text was contained in the warning given by the Great Teacher to His disciples when upon earth, but which still rings down the corridor of ages, and

warns as earnestly and solemnly to-day as when in old Judea, He said, "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." With unflagging interest Ruth closely followed him all through his sermon, which was remarkably forceful, yet plain and practical. His theological views were sternly orthodox and were illuminating and convincing. Then followed an earnest, impressive prayer by the Presiding Elder, Rev. Mr. Carrollton, who was sitting near the altar. He was a tall man of fine physique, white hair, and a saint-like intellectual face—a face purified through suffering—and a gentle humility of demeanor. As the full tones of the good man arose in a passionate pleading, in accent soulful and fervent, it seemed to bring to each bowed head a sense of relief.

When the doxology was concluded, the large congregation began to file orderly out of the church amidst the brilliant strains of music, which swept down from the gilded pipes, keeping time as it were to the soft rustle and tread of the dispersing throng.

A number of friends pressed forward to give Mrs. Grayson a hand-clasp, and those who could not get near enough to do this, nodded and smiled their salutation and passed on. "Love! Serve!" this beautiful motto of the late Lord Shaftesbury, one of England's noblemen, occurred to Ruth, and she thought how applicable it was to Mrs. Grayson as she saw how the rich and poor vied in doing her honor. At this moment she was talking with a very handsome lady, rather large, with a sweet, happy face, and Ruth was regarding her with interest when Mrs. Grayson turned and said, "Mrs. Norwood, this is Miss Arnold, my brother's ward."

"I am pleased to meet you, Miss Arnold," she said, cordially extending her hand. "I saw from The Sentinel that you had arrived in our city, and I hope this may prove the first of many pleasant meetings with you." Then, adding a few more gracious words of welcome to her, Mrs. Norwood turned away to greet others in her husband's large congregation.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was not Dr. Leslie's habit to go out of town more than a week or two at a time during the summer season, but he generally managed to hurry Mrs. Grayson and Nellie off for at least six weeks.

On the morning they were to leave, Mrs. Grayson glanced hurriedly over the letters which had arrived by the morning's mail. Among the several letters for her there was one from Carl, which received her first attention, and after satisfying herself that he was well and happy, she thrust it along with others in her traveling satchel to read leisurely on the way.

Nellie ran to the hall table, and the next few seconds applied herself diligently to gathering up her things.

"Oh, Uncle Ralph, we'll be sure to miss the train. Do come along, Mamma, and Cousin Ruth; let us hurry."

Ruth looked wonderfully bright and pretty as she came down the steps smiling and talking. She wore a plain but handsome black traveling dress and hat, and the roses in her cheeks bore well the challenge of those she carried in her hand. When they had reached the phaeton, she turned a smiling face to her guardian and asked in a rather playful spirit,

"How long are we to be banished?"

"Well, if you will submit the length of your banishment to my approval, I shall say stay until I give you a permit to return—six, or maybe eight, weeks," he answered in the same light spirit.

Virgil smiled blandly, touched up the spirited horses and started at quite a reckless speed for the station.

During the pauses at the different stations, Ruth watched with intense interest the moving scene, which was an endless source of entertainment to her—the miscellaneous collection of people which invariably gathered about the train, staring, gossipping, and exchanging a word or two with any passengers who happened to come out on the platform or were leaning from the car window to take in a general survey of the surroundings. There was a blending of light and movement and color in the shifting scenes, with vivid suggestions of the individual history of the people and their belongings, which strangers rarely read amiss.

It was while Ruth was taking a sort of mental inventory of the personal characteristics of her fellow-passengers that she became suddenly conscious of a pair of soft black eyes fixed upon her with quiet scrutiny. The owner was a young man who sat just in the rear of Mrs. Grayson. He was scrupulously attired in a black suit and immaculate linen, with close-cut black hair, and dark but clear complexion, and, as soon as Ruth turned and surprised his gaze, he quickly looked in another direction, but his face still wore the same expression, and the lips the same melancholy smile she had first noted. His was a face refined by earnest, serious thought, but over which, when he spoke, a warm light trembled and broke, kindling a soft gleam in the dark depths of the thoughtful eyes.

Ruth found herself watching with a kind of fascination this new face among her fellow-

travelers, and one that she became more and more interested in studying, till Nellie got restless and with her trivial talk appropriated her attention. Then she climbed up on her knees upon the seat, and before Ruth was made aware of her intention, leaned with her lithe sinuosity perilously far out of the car window.

The next moment the dark-eyed stranger bent over, quietly took hold of a fold of her skirt and attempted to draw her gently in.

In a second, Nellie sprang back, looked around in calm wonder, and then asked in childish petulance, "What am I doing, Mamma?"

But Mrs. Grayson who had been absorbed in her book had not noticed Nellie's dangerous posturing, and when she uttered this exclamation, looked up, let her book fall in her lap, and turned an inquiring glance toward the stranger, who still held Nellie's dress and was saying to her in a kind tone—

"You are all right, now. I hope I didn't startle you." In an instant Mrs. Grayson perceived what had happened.

"Oh, thank you, sir," she said, "you are very kind. I should have paid more attention to my little girl, but was reading, and for the moment failed to observe her movements. I am sorry that my seeming neglect should have given you this trouble. Indeed, I am under great obligations to you, sir."

In her burst of gratitude for the thoughtful chivalry of the stranger her kind eyes meant much more than she said. She saw at a glance that he was a gentleman, for he had that subtle stamp in his look and bearing which is unmistakable.

"Please do not mention it, Madam. I am very happy to have rendered the service. Your little girl, I am sure, did not realize her danger."

While he talked he had been casting furtive glances at Ruth, who at that moment was trying with graceful futility to lower the latticed shade of the window, in order to shut out the hot sunshine which now streamed in and almost blinded her with its dazzle.

With that nameless refinement innate in the Southern gentleman of birth and breeding, the stranger bowed and said, "Permit me to assist you." Then walking round to the back of the seat which Ruth occupied, bent over, pressed the stubborn spring and without any superfluity of effort it yielded readily to his manipulations.

"Thank you," she said, simply and politely, but in a tone which conveyed a hint that she did not wish to say anything further, and a little color stole into her cheek; and, as he bowed his acknowledgment of her thanks, and turned to resume his seat, Nellie touched him on the sleeve and burst out as if all her energies were concentrated upon the one aim.

"Won't you take a seat with us, sir? You have been so good to me; I should like to talk to you. See, you can sit by my mamma, and I will sit by Cousin Ruth." She jumped suddenly down as she spoke, and got in the reversed seat.

"Now, you can sit there," she added, pointing to the vacant seat by the window.

The stranger thanked her and hesitated, with his hand still upon the back of the seat; but at that moment, Mrs. Grayson, smiling cordially, repeated Nellie's invitation, and at the same time made room for him beside herself, drawing her

skirts aside so as to leave the end of the seat clear, and adding, "It seems that we are quite helpless without you, and I shall be very glad to have you."

When he had taken the seat Mrs. Grayson offered him, he took a card from his breast pocket and quietly handed it to her. She looked at it, smiled, then offered him her hand.

"I am pleased to meet you, Mr. Hawleigh." Then looking at Ruth, she added, "Let me introduce you to Miss Arnold, Mr. Hawleigh; and this is Nellie Grayson, my little daughter; and of course I am Mrs. Grayson;" she laughed, as if suddenly remembering that she should have introduced herself first.

CHAPTER XIV.

So it came to pass quite naturally that Mr. Hawleigh should get acquainted with these people whom he had been observing with more than passing interest, and wondering who they were ever since he had boarded the train several hours previous at the beautiful little city, Statesville, en route for Asheville.

As Mr. Hawleigh was thoroughly acquainted with the line over which they were traveling, he gave them bits of interesting information and history about the towns and villages through which they passed.

After leaving Morganton they began to get visions of long stretches of blue mountain peaks, rising range after range into illimitable distance, and as they went up, the great Appalachian Chain seemed to climb dauntlessly high till it reached the far blue sky.

There was a shimmering of sunlight and shadow —that twinkling of golden sunbeams entangled in the meshes of silvery mist, over hill and valley—that was simply enchanting.

Under the stimulus of her environments, so new to her, Nellie was enthused with delight, and on more than one occasion did her mother gently remonstrate with her for her garrulity, but she would soon forget and prattle on as thoughtlessly as ever. Once in a burst of confidence, she leaned towards Mr. Hawleigh and said,

"We are going to Asheville to spend a week; and I'm so glad, for I heard you tell Cousin Ruth that you are going there too. And then we are going to Warm Springs, and from there

to the White Sulphur Springs; and—and—oh, well, I don't know where else; but Uncle Ralph told mamma he wanted Cousin Ruth to see our beautiful mountains; so I reckon we are going everywhere till we see them."

She stopped a moment, and seeing that he was about to speak, asked quickly, "Is your home in Asheville, Mr. Hawleigh, or are you just going there on a visit, as we are?"

Mr. Hawleigh smiled, and his eyes wandered to Ruth, who was just then looking absently out the opposite window.

"Yes, my home was in Asheville, but I'm not living there now. I'm only going there to visit some very dear friends and relations, and trust I shall see you quite often while you are there."

"Oh, I hope so, too, for I like you very much," she said, in her direct, impulsive way, speaking the thoughts that were in her mind.

"Well, I assure you, Nellie, the liking is mutual," he laughed, then reached over and took her doll which lay upon her lap.

"What place is this, Mr. Hawleigh," she asked, with a glance round at her new friend. "Oh, Mamma, do look at that jet of water flying way up in the air." Nellie hung half way out the window again, watching the spray.

"This is Round Knob, and that fountain is something of a wonder," he answered, enlightening her ignorance. "It throws a jet about two hundred and sixty-eight feet high, and it is said to be the second highest fountain in the world. The water is brought from a spring on the top of one of those high mountains you see over there."

Through the liquid meshes of silvery spray

thousands of golden sunbeams shimmered and twirled in prismatic radiance, as bright and beautiful as foam bells on the deep, and fell noiselessly in the brick environed basin beneath, where the water twinkled in glancing brightness.

"We are crossing the mountain now, and if you ladies care to see one of the grandest pieces of railroad engineering in the South you will have an opportunity to do so," said Mr. Hawleigh ten minutes later.

As the engine with its long train of cars labored slowly up and around the mountain, once or twice it seemed to stand perfectly still, and when midway over the dizzy, circling trestle work, suspended as it were between heaven and earth. Mr. Hawleigh made an expressive gesture with his hand, without speaking, to another train of cars, far beneath them, bearing its precious living freight of humanity up over the perilous railway they had just traversed. It was a thrilling sight, and one never to be forgotten.

As they glided on to a region of still greater elevation, the air became purer and more elastic, they exulted with new life and vigor, and it seemed that ten thousand glories and beauties never seen or dreamt of before, delighted and dazzled the eye at every turn; giant crags, steep precipices rising sheer and bold, fern-clad gorges, deep and wild, rushing torrents and foaming cascades, all glistening resplendent in the sunlight, while out from the emerald twilight of the wood, spicy fragrance flung off from hidden flowers was borne to them on the delicious mountain breeze.

Mr. Hawleigh turned to Mrs. Grayson and said, "I suppose you have visited the mountains

before, but Miss Arnold, this is your first visit, is it not?"

"Yes, to the mountains of North Carolina—" she hesitated as if she intended to say something more, but suddenly seemed to change her mind, and instead, began brushing off with her handkerchief the gray cinders which powdered her black dress. Then she looked up with a bright smile, and said, "Here are men's wonderful achievements side by side with the wonderful works of the Creator, but the Creator's works rank far above those of man. Surely we shall see nothing finer or more beautiful than this."

"I think you will change your opinion, my dear, when you have seen more of our mountain scenery," said Mrs. Grayson, "and will, perhaps, wonder like thousands of others who, after so long a time, visit this palace of Nature, why it is not the favorite resort of all the world."

While they sat talking, the light of the day was suddenly blotted out, and they were left in what at first appeared utter darkness. Nellie was taken completely by surprise at the transition, and with a little scream she threw herself forward and buried her face in her mother's lap. Mrs. Grayson bent over her and explained the cause of the sudden darkness.

"We are passing a tunnel, Nellie, going through the mountain, and we'll be out presently. Hold up your head and see, my dear, that it is not so dark after all. The porter lighted the lamps while you were looking out the window."

Nellie timidly lifted her head and glanced furtively through her fingers, which she still held over her eyes, and, becoming used to the dim light, with a sigh of relief let her hands drop

upon her lap. Then she leaned her head back against the seat in a languid attitude and stared up at the pale light flickering through the dim globes, and was perfectly still until they were well out of the tunnel.

She had been but a few minutes, however, in a comfortable position, when her attention was attracted by the tumultuous shouting and cheering of many voices outside.

In an instant every window and shutter which had been lowered as a protection against the dust and glare was hurriedly thrown up, and every head nearest the windows thrust out.

"What is it? What is the matter?" were questions eagerly asked on all sides. As they drew near the station the cheering became stronger and more vociferous. Ruth turned and looked inquiringly at Mr. Hawleigh, who at that moment had withdrawn his head from the open window.

"What is it?" she asked, in a disquieted tone.

Just then another shout, almost deafening, went up "Three cheers for Zeb. Vance! Our Zeb!" The effect on Mr. Hawleigh, as well as the crowd and everyone in the coach, was magical. They seemed suddenly galvanized.

Mr. Hawleigh rose quickly, a bright light of pleasure flashed into his face; and at the same moment Mrs. Grayson and Ruth got up also.

"Let us go out on the platform and see North Carolina's greatest hero — the 'Sage of Gombroon'—the uncrowned king of a noble people," he said, carefully piloting them through the good-natured crowd to a position where they could see what was going on.

Upon the long platform of the station-house,

and in its immediate vicinity a large crowd had gathered—apparently every person in the little village—men, women and children and thrifty farmers from the country who happened to be present with their market produce; and in their midst towered a man, a splendid specimen of physical manhood, with iron-gray hair and mustache, and a face remarkable for its expressiveness, and for its manifold changefulness from grave to gay.

His whole bearing, like his speech, was absolutely free from any hint of affectation and self-consciousness, and Ruth noticed that in his brief intercourse with these people, the so-called common people, who in their excitement and enthusiasm seemed as though they could not get near enough to him, he was genial, frank and bubbling over with good humor, perfectly at home amongst the very humblest of them all.

Right here near his own mountain home, Gombroon, he was as popular, eagerly sought, and as heartily cheered as in the council chamber of the Nation, where he had won world-wide fame as an orator, a politician and a statesman.

"How they seem to love him," said Ruth, as they stood watching the people crowd around him, pressing him close on every side, and all eager to shake hands with him.

"Love him," repeated Mr. Hawleigh, "they—we idolize him. No man was ever loved more devoutly, followed so implicitly, and none ever swayed the masses so completely. Yes, he is the idol of North Carolinians. He loves them and they love him. He is distinctively a man of the people, and is a colossal figure in State affairs. Devotion to principle is the dominant trait of his

character, and he dares to do right, regardless of the consequences. I do not suppose there is a home within the borders of the State, from the cabin of the poor to the mansion of the rich, that does not know of and love that man."

At that moment a shout of laughter rang out. "Vance is a true humorist, too," Mr. Hawleigh said, smiling; "and his wit is genuinely original; but still, however sportive he may be, he is never cynical, neither does he try to hurt any one by his volatile and irrepressible humor. He is one of the very few men who live constantly before the public, whose popularity has never waned. In my opinion it is simply because of that human-heartedness in him which appeals to the elementary feelings and instincts, and which do not age with the world. A great man like Zeb. Vance grows greater with each proceeding year, and the people's love for such a man is stronger than their admiration. Like a halo there shines round him 'the glory of distinction obtained—of brave deeds done!'"

Ruth looked steadily at him and listened with a deepening interest—there was such a fine sincerity in his tone.

"You are indeed a most chivalrous champion of the virtues and graces of your countryman, Mr. Hawleigh," she said smiling, "but I'm sure Senator Vance is worthy of all the respect and adoration the people bestow upon him."

"There is no question about that," he answered, with decision and dignity.

On the present occasion Senator Vance was going to Asheville, and as he moved toward the car the people literally hedged him in, so reluctant were they to part with him, and as the

train slowly pulled out of the station, round after round of hearty cheers went up, the demonstration lasting till the train was entirely out of sight.

"I am sorry that Senator Vance did not come into this car, so you could have seen more of him," said Mr. Hawleigh, when they had returned to their seats.

"Do such crowds generally greet him wherever he goes?" Ruth asked wonderingly.

"Yes, he draws people like a magnet. It is only necessary for them to hear his name—to know that he is present—and in a little while he is surrounded, and then it is an ovation. He is certainly a very wonderful man."

"I am not surprised that he should be the most conspicuous figure in the State, to-day," said Ruth. "I have read that amusing little incident which occurred some years ago—during that famous interview between himself when he was Governor of North Carolina, and the Governor of South Carolina, and now that I have seen Senator Vance, I can better appreciate it."

Mr. Hawleigh laughed. "You allude to the incident about 'a long time between drinks!' Senator Vance tells that joke on himself with inimitable humor, and it has passed into tradition, I dare say to be handed down to generations to come."

There was a moment's silence, and then Mrs. Grayson said with quiet emphasis—

"If there is any one thing which North Carolina should feel justly proud of, it is her brilliant array of distinguished people who were born and reared upon her soil. Their name is legion, and it would take volumes to recount their achieve-

ments. While many of them have won a national reputation, some are known and honored throughout the world, and their lustre will remain undimmed for many long ages in the future."

She looked at Mr. Hawleigh as she spoke, who gave her a responsive look and smile.

"Yes, and quite a number of our young men in the present day, too, are coming to the front and may become celebrities," he said. "Every year some of our North Carolina boys carry off the highest honors in the foremost universities at the North, and who knows but that some one of these may perhaps in time write the history of the dear old Commonwealth, vindicate her honor, and place her amongst the galaxy of States where she rightly belongs?"

"Why, have you no written history of your State?" Ruth asked, with a look of interested surprise, while a flush of color warmed her delicate cheek.

"Oh, yes, several well-written histories, or parts of histories," Mr. Hawleigh responded. "We have an excellent book written by Dr. Lyman Draper, a gentleman born and reared at the North. 'Heroes of King's Mountain,' is the title of it, and it is a work of great interest as well as merit, and represents, I am told, twenty years' careful research."

"We still have ample material for other valuable histories," said Mrs. Grayson, "and into each should be recorded the fact that the brave people of North Carolina were the first to assert American independence—a fact that has been too well established now to be doubted save by those who are reluctant to accredit any glory and honor to the Old North State."

This last remark reminded Ruth of a question she intended asking Mr. Hawleigh when they were discussing the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence a few moments before, and she now turned to him with the query she had intended putting to him. It was about Charlotte. She had met a Miss Dinsmore from that city, at Major Yeamons—a beautiful and charming young lady, with whom she was much pleased.

"Yes, Charlotte is a very delightful place," he said "and the hearts of her refined and cultivated people are as warm and genial as their climate."

"I should imagine so, if Miss Dinsmore is a fair representative," Ruth answered, then blushed a little as Mr. Hawleigh's dark eyes rested on her with a look which, though he was unconscious of it, spoke his honest admiration of her own beautiful face. Turning to Mrs. Grayson, he said, "We shall soon be in Asheville, now, Mrs. Grayson, but before we part I must thank you and Miss Arnold for the social kindliness you have shown me, and assure you of my happiness in knowing you both. During your stay in Asheville, if I can be of service to you in any way, please command me. You will find the number of my address on the card I gave you."

There was a look of genuine pleasure on his frank, open face, and a geniality in his demeanor which convinced them of his sincerity. They knew that his words were not mere expression of cold conventionality, uttered because he was expected to say something civil and appropriate on such an occasion, but frank, honest words of gratification.

"It is we who have cause to be grateful," said Mrs. Grayson, "and I hope we shall meet you again."

Just then the whistle blew and the porter yelled "Asheville!" and Mrs. Grayson rose, drawing on her gloves, with a courteous, gentle smile.

"I will give myself the pleasure of calling on you to-morrow morning, if I may. Nellie tells me that you will be staying at Kenilworth about a week?" said Mr. Hawleigh.

"Yes, and we shall be happy to have you call on us there—and to-morrow morning will be perfectly agreeable to us," she returned cordially.

Meanwhile Julia had come forward and gathered up their things and followed in their wake as they slowly elbowed their way to the door.

"This way, if you please," said Mr. Hawleigh, taking the initiative and glancing back as they got off the car in the midst of the jostling crowd and the yelling of the aggressive hackmen. "Here is one of the Kenilworth carriages, and the porter will look after your baggage."

After he had assisted them in, and the carriage started off, Nellie looked back and with a gracious smile called out, "Be sure not to forget your promise, Mr. Hawleigh."

Then the driver touched up the horses again and they soon disappeared in the midst of other carriages and a whirlwind of dust.

* * * * * * * *

On the following morning after his meeting with Mrs. Grayson and Ruth, Mr. Hawleigh, agreeable to his promise, found him in the Hotel Kenilworth, awaiting an answer to his card.

The soft rustle of Mrs. Grayson's dress, as she

entered the room at that moment, accompanied by Ruth, caused Mr. Hawleigh to turn, and he rose at once and approached them.

"We were expecting you, Mr. Hawleigh, and it is so kind of you to come," said Mrs. Grayson. "We have just been arranging for a drive about the city, and I shall be pleased to have you go with us, if it is not taking up too much of your time."

"I shall be most happy. I am only sorry that you forestalled my purpose and supplied the entertainment. I had—"

"The carriage is waiting your pleasure, Madam," the colored servant announced from the doorway at this moment, interrupting him.

* * * * * * * *

"You must come to see us again," Nellie said a few hours later to Mr. Hawleigh, as he was bidding them good-bye. Mrs. Grayson stood holding her guest's hand, while Ruth stood by unconsciously taking off her gloves. "I do not know just how long we will be in your city, Mr. Hawleigh, but I hope we shall see more of you before we go," said Mrs. Grayson. "I hope the day has been a very pleasant one for us all."

"Now we'll go to our room," she continued, turning to Ruth and Nellie after Mr. Hawleigh had left. "Nellie must take a nap before dinner, and meanwhile I will write to Ralph and Carl, and let them know that we are safe and well in 'The Land of the Sky.'"

CHAPTER XV.

It was one warm afternoon about the middle of August, and the monotonous buzzing of insects filled the air with their never-ceasing music, that Mrs. Grayson and her little party reached the Haywood White Sulphur Springs in time for a late dinner.

They had been spending several weeks visiting some of the most popular summer resorts in the mountains.

As they drove through the beautiful grounds, up the broad carriage way, and stopped in front of the commodious hotel, their appearance excited the usual complement of remarks, and they received the usual amount of well-bred staring bestowed upon all new comers from the gay, laughing group assembled on the long verandas and upon the shady lawn.

One quickly slips into the purposeless routine of watering-place life, with its charming air of do-nothing gayety, movement, languid stir, and ease which pervades such places.

That afternoon Mrs. Grayson, Ruth and Nellie went out on the lawn and sat under one of the large shade trees, near where an animated game of lawn tennis was in progress.

About the prettily shaded springs lively groups of young people were gathered, and detachments of children strolled hither and thither in unmolested freedom, while in the shady retreats all about the grounds, bright colored hammocks were slung, and their occupants read, or idly lounged, tilting in the delicious breeze.

"Surely this must be the real Arcadia," said Ruth.

"I am glad you are not disappointed in the place," said Mrs. Grayson. Then added thoughtfully, "I think now we will remain here until the last of the month, and then return home. That will give you ample time to get ready for school—that is, if you do not mind."

"I am sure it is very good of you, Mrs. Grayson, to consider my pleasure and convenience. Certainly, I shall not mind staying at all. I fancy there is more danger of my wishing to prolong these delightful days indefinitely when we get ready to leave," said Ruth brightly.

Ruth noticed among the gay figures flashing here and there over the lawn a group of persons—two ladies and two gentlemen—who seemed engaged in animated discussion about the game in which they had participated. One of the ladies was laughing and talking with elaborate vivacity, and as they drifted near, Ruth thought she half recognized one of the gentlemen, the smaller of the two, when almost immediately a burst of feminine laughter caused Nellie to turn suddenly round, give a start, and eagerly exclaim on the spur of the moment as she ran forward: "Well, I'll declare! There's Mr. Hawleigh! Where did you come from? and how long have you been here? I'm so glad to see you," she said, all in one hurried breath, as she grasped his hand, and not giving him time to answer. He greeted her cordially, then taking off his hat, approached Mrs. Grayson, his manner eager and animated.

"Mrs. Grayson, this is indeed an unexpected pleasure. Miss Arnold," he said, turning to her with the same deferential ease and grace, proffering his hand, "I am very glad to meet you again."

He glanced toward the friends from whom he had quite suddenly detached himself, conscious of the courtesy due them, but unavoidably withheld—then said, looking at Mrs. Grayson, "I should be pleased to introduce them, if you will allow me."

"I shall be pleased to know them," she said. They stepped a few paces near the group, and Mr. Hawleigh said, "Miss Rivers, permit me to introduce you to Mrs. Grayson and Miss Arnold." The other lady was standing a little apart, talking to Nellie, but looked up just at that moment and he added, "Miss Exum—Mrs. Grayson and Miss Arnold." Then turning to the gentleman who had been watching the introductions with that air of polite interest that one involuntarily assumes on a like occasion, Mr. Hawleigh continued, "My friend, Mr. Rivers." As soon as the exchange of civilities had been disposed of, Mrs. Grayson led the way to the seats which she and Ruth had just vacated, and they all sat down.

They had not been talking a great while before Ruth discovered that Miss Rivers and Miss Exum were thorough-going society young ladies, and had whiled away the greater part of the summer season down by the waves of several fashionable seaside resorts, and were now bidding adieu to the fascinations of this mountain watering-place, preparatory to their return home—Miss Rivers to Charleston, South Carolina, and Miss Exum to Atlanta, Georgia. These personal facts, and others, had been involuntarily conveyed in the course of the general small talk which followed.

As the conversation progessed from one topic

to another, Ruth had been taking mental photographs of her new acquaintances. Just then she furled her fan and laid it upon her lap.

"It has been oppressively warm all day," she observed to Mr. Hawleigh, sitting near her.

"Yes, it has indeed; quite tropical. By the way, I am reminded to ask you, Miss Arnold, if you are one of the 'sunrise worshipers,'" he said, smiling.

Ruth opened her eyes wide and looked up to see what he meant, and then smiled too.

"Oh, you mean, have I witnessed a sunrise since I've been in the mountains? I am sorry to say that I have not, but the opportunity and not the inclination has been lacking. Invariably, something has happened every time that we have planned to see one."

"O, then you must by all means join our party and go with us to Hiawatha's Heights. It is said that the sunrise from that point is perfectly grand and bewildering," said Miss Exum. She turned to Mr. Rivers. "Has it been decided that we go to-morrow morning? You know we've delegated you master of ceremonies of the 'Sunrise Expedition.'"

"I don't think it has been quite settled yet, whether we go to-morrow morning or the one following. If I can succeed in getting the donkeys, and the weather is favorable, I know of nothing else to the contrary. Mrs. Grayson, we shall be pleased to have you and Miss Arnold go with us, should I be fortunate enough to perfect our plans for the trip."

"How kind! We shall be pleased to join you."

At that instant a slender, handsome gentle-

man with blonde hair and mustache approached them. He was smoking a cigar, and sauntered along with a bright, careless air. Miss Rivers gave a quick glance at Maud Exum, who pretended not to see this addition to their party.

"Just in time to help us out of a difficulty, Charlie," said Mr. Rivers, as the person addressed as "Charlie" came up.

"Pardon my intrusion," he said hastily, lifting his hat and addressing the little company. "I was not aware there were strangers with you." This to Mr. Rivers, and he glanced at Mrs. Grayson and Ruth. Thereupon Mr. Rivers presented him to the latter two ladies, and soon he glided into place and the conversation with that ease and aptitude that people in society naturally fall into in making new acquaintances.

As they leisurely wended their way back to the hotel, cool, playful winds swept from the mountain peaks, now bathed in the radiance of the setting sun, and frolicked across the lawn powdered with tiny gold blossoms and dappled with shadows, then drifted lazily away over darkling plains and valleys in remote distances.

On the long veranda, handsomely dressed people in the coolest and freshest of toilets chatted and promenaded while the band played a brilliant waltz, and from within came the sound of merry lite and laughter.

"Oh, here you are," a voice exclaimed jauntily from the upper veranda, at the same moment pelting Mr. Rivers with a bouquet of wild flowers, as he and Ruth Arnold ascended the steps. He threw back his head and looked up smiling, hoping to catch a glimpse of the fair madcap; but she had vanished.

"Well, unfortunately, I'm not seer enough to know if the floral pelting was intended as a compliment or as a drubbing," he laughed, examining the flowers.

"Looking for a card, Rivers?" a masculine voice facetiously called out across the veranda from among the loungers. "Better accept them on good faith, and ask no questions," said the same voice.

There was a general laugh at Mr. Rivers' expense, in which he joined.

"Don't be jealous, Frank," he returned blithely, shaking the flowers at him and rather touched out of his habitual haugthy reserve. "I've got an exquisite bouquet, at any rate."

At this time Miss Exum and Mr. Hawkins came up in time to enjoy the joke about the flowers, there was more talking and bantering among themselves, and then the ladies separated to go to their respective apartments to make a hurried toilet for supper.

"Don't forget, Miss Arnold! early to-morrow morning!" called back Miss Exum, wishing to say something to Ruth—then she threw her a kiss and a gay "*au revoir*," and ran lightly up stairs, humming as she went snatches from that pretty, sentimental song, "I promise thee."

CHAPTER XVI.

At a wonderfully early hour the next morning the little party was astir. An air of bustle and preparation pervaded the hotel, or that part of it where the excursionists were gathered making arrangements to depart.

They arrived at the summit of the mountain in due season and without misadventure, and while waiting for the sunrise hour the gentlemen busied themselves in improvising a camp and lighting the camp fire.

They were still gathered about this, chatting and laughing, when Mrs. Grayson, who had been intently watching the east for the first sign of sunrise, now directed their attention to the pale streak of light which lay along the edge of the horizon. With an apparent simultaneity of action, each one turned his face toward the east.

"I believe we shall have a fine sunrise, after all," she said; "and just such a one as we hoped to witness. How fortunate we are to have come to-day."

"But just look at the fog, Mamma!" cried Nellie in a tone of disappointment. "We can't see a thing for that."

"That mist is cloud, Nellie," said Mr. Hawleigh, drawing Nellie in front of him and laying his hands lightly upon her shoulders; "and when the sun comes up it will pass away and you will see one of the loveliest sights in all the State—rugged mountains, limpid lakes, soft sylvan scenery and wooded island."

"Oh, do look!" exclaimed Miss Exum enthusiastically, pointing in the direction of the flash-

ing radiance and appealing to the little company. "Yonder comes the lazy old king at last, and he's coming in gorgeous pomp and splendor, too. How grand!"

They all stood gazing in wonder and admiration at the sunrise glow which was widening and growing brighter and brighter every moment. Now and then some one of them would burst forth into ecstacies and then sink into silence. As they gazed entranced, the sunrise came—the most gorgeous sunrise their eyes had ever beheld, and one whose pageant no future glory on earth could ever efface from memory. A common awe seemed to pervade every heart.

A long, hesitating, quivering ray of light shot forward until it touched the star that burned in the zenith. The star paled in splendor, and the lesser ones faded one by one. Then wave after wave of light, tinted with prismatic radiance, surged up from the crimson glories of the east, filling the enchanting prospect with its luminous glory. As a mighty monarch returns from victory with his glittering cohort of warriors, so the sun was now followed and surrounded, but unobscured by clouds of every shape and tinted with every hue. Massive rays of light pierced them like flaming swords of cherubim, and glowed beyond and above them in the sky with blinding splendor.

"I believe I could watch that scene of enchantment forever," said Miss Exum with delight, her eyes dilating wide. "It is more stupendous and beautiful than my most vivid fancy ever pictured the works of eastern genii, even."

"I am forcibly reminded of the vision of the Christian's triumph, and the Celestial City,"

said Mrs. Grayson. "It seems to me that I never before enjoyed such glorious thoughts of the happy dawning of the last day."

"Are we really above the clouds, Mr. Hawleigh?" asked Nellie, with some misgiving in her tone.

"Indeed, we are. But you needn't be afraid, Nellie. Now, look yonder where the mist is moving, just like great billows of distant water rolling in the sunshine. Isn't it lovely? Let us suppose that the 'Maid of the Mist' is cruising there in her phantom ship—"

"Or that the ghost of some Indian warrior whose savage war-cry has drowned the murmur of the bright waters, cleft by the keel of his birch-bark canoe, is cruising alongside of her," laughed Miss Exum. "I'd like to think so, wouldn't you, little Nell?"

"Yes, but I shouldn't like to be down there with them," said Nellie, looking out over the mist which was curling away in golden wreaths.

"Miss Arnold, did you ever see anything so gloriously grand and beautiful as that?" Mr. Hawleigh turned to Ruth with a sudden motion, and her beautiful eyes were solemn and full of thought, and showed that her whole soul was absorbed in the sublimity of the scene.

"I find myself at a loss to express my delight, so I keep silent. I only wish that I might retain an impression of this picture, as I now see it, as long as I live. It is as my guardian, Dr. Leslie, told me—no pen can describe, nor any artist paint it—the indefinable charm of the exaltation would be left out." She spoke with a dreamy remoteness of tone, and there was a soft, sad dreaminess in her lovely eyes. Mr.

Hawleigh could not help gazing admiringly into the bright, inspired, upturned face—a face which charmed him irresistibly, though it roused no softer feeling than that of admiration of its beauty.

Miss Exum interrupted his glowing reverie with a bright face and a winning appeal.

"Oh, Mr. Hawleigh, doesn't your muse feel the inspiration of the moment, and won't you recite something appropriate to the occasion?"

"I'm not a poet, Miss Maud," he answered, with a laugh of evasion. "I was just thinking how like this is to human existence," waving his hand toward the scene before him.

"Well, I am thinking about the poetry of it," she said flippantly. Haven't I read some verses that you've published—I'm quite sure I have somewhere. Let me think—where did I see them? O, pshaw, I can't recall just now; but never mind, I saw them," she said. "But if you are too modest to give us something original, suppose you recite something from your favorite poet," she persisted.

"I have several," he admitted, calmly smiling.

"Oh, dear, you are incorrigible. Well, let me suggest Wordsworth, or Bryant, or Longfellow—the last two are among my favorites."

"Next to possessing 'the faculty divine, to scatter flowers along one's path, and lift one's gaze to the stars,' as did your gifted favorites, I should be most happy to oblige you, Miss Maud, but frankly, I must confess, I'm unequal to complying with your request. It seems to me that when we have the vividness and splendor of the reality before us, we do not need the dazzling

glow of the imagination to light it up, as it were."

"Perhaps not," she sighed, with reserved regrets as she turned away to take a last look at the prospect at which the others were still gazing. Just at that moment a hunter's horn sounded with a resonant note over the Alpine-like hills, followed by the baying of several deer hounds, giving tongue lustily, drawing nearer and yet nearer, and running as though straining themselves with game in sight. Suddenly the music of the dogs and horn seemed to stop, but presently rose again on a distant plateau—the next moment it was lost in the valley below.

Miss Exum began to hum softly to herself, "Kathleen Mavourneen."

"Do you know, I never hear the sound of a hunter's horn or the bay of a dog in the early morning that that song doesn't flash into my mind?" she said, a quick color coming into her face. "I think it is one of the very sweetest little ballads I ever heard, and it should never get too old-fashioned to be sung, though one rarely hears it now-a-days. Somehow its pathos touches me, and makes me strangely sad."

"Yes, I like it, too," he said, "but I do not known that it affects me in that way. When we return to the hotel I should be glad if you will play and sing it for me."

"Piano or guitar—which shall it be," she asked quickly, with a conscious blush.

"Either." Then added, "I'm glad we didn't prolong our slumbers as did the indolent Kathleen, or we should have missed the dazzling glories of this enchanted hour. See yonder! Do you want sublimer poetry, or a more magnifi-

cent picture than that? It almost takes one's breath away, and I do feel inpsired at this moment to repeat these lines of Bryant:

> "My heart is awed within me when I think
> Of the great miracle that still goes on,
> In silence, round me—the perpetual work
> Of thy creation, finished, yet renewed
> Forever. Written on thy works I read
> The lesson of thy own eternity."

"Those lines are from Bryant's 'Forest Hymn,' are they not?" she asked.

"Yes. I wish I could remember all of it," he said, and then they relapsed into silence.

Faintly mingling with the far-off skies, the blue of the mountains outlined the panorama like a halo of encircling sublimity; the valleys of distant rivers bordered with trees seemed like threads of silken green leading the eye toward the sea, till they vanished from view; town after town dotted the vast landscape; hundreds of plantations blended their various lights and shades; mighty forests, whose shadowy haunts only the footsteps of the Indian braves had penetrated, as they roamed in quest of game, while gorgeous masses of golden vapor towered above the remote mountain crests until the abyss of heaven had swallowed up their forms.

"There is something peculiarly inspiring in those vast depths of air," said Mr. Rivers, "and I cannot help wondering if people living in this 'Land of the Sky' can be actuated by any sordid motive."

"I don't know about that, but I do know I feel actuated by a yearning toward the source of supply," laughed Miss Exum; "for I am ravenously hungry. This atmosphere is just like a tonic, and if it has affected the rest of you

as it has me, I have my doubts if we'll have enough lunch to go round."

"If you will all come now, we will go to the carriage and have lunch," Mrs. Grayson said, "and afterwards, I think we'll be quite ready to return home."

"Mrs. Grayson, it is most fortunate that we have you with us. You have consideration to the last degree, and we are certainly indebted to you for your forethought," said Mr. Hawkins. "I had forgotten all about the lunch."

The party at the table had broken up into laughing, chattering groups, and were strolling about the ground enjoying themselves in their several different ways.

The fragments of the repast had been gathered together, packed in the hamper and returned to the carriage.

Suddenly, on the stillness, there broke a low, rumbling sound, resembling the distant roar of artillery, drawing nearer in subdued force, then gradually retreating, while upon Nature there fell a strange, still calm which awed creation into instinctive silence, and then she seemed to hold her breath and listen. Involuntarily, everyone paused and looked upward at the cloudless sky, unchanged, serene and beautiful.

"Do you think we are going to have a storm?" Miss Rivers asked, with a grave face, looking at Mr. Hawleigh; "I can't see even a floating cloud."

"Yes, I think we are," he replied, "and the best thing for us to do is to get down the mountain as soon as possible. I can tell you these mountain showers mean business, and we might as well stand under a waterfall as to have their

contents emptied upon our heads. We'd better go back to the carriage. I see the driver has put to the horses, and there, Mrs. Grayson is beckoning to us. Miss Maud, I will suggest that you take my seat in the carriage and I will ride your horse, and Miss Arnold—" he stopped —"could you both manage one seat, and I would lead the horse?"

"Dear me, no," Miss Exum said, laughing merrily, "I couldn't think of doing such a thing. Why, it will be glorious fun to get a good drenching, and since I've already ruined my dress it doesn't matter in the least."

"But your health, Maud—that is much more important than your dress. You should take care of your health, if nothing else. Now, do be sensible and listen to reason," catechised Miss Rivers, with an earnestness Maud had never known her to manifest in another's interest before. But nothing she could say moved Maud from her purpose. She looked up again, scanning the heavens and shading her eyes with her hand from the dazzling sun.

"Indeed, I have no sort of faith in the expected storm. We'll be at the Springs long before it comes; at any rate, I am willing to risk it, for it would be too bad that I should lose my horseback ride. Here comes Mr. Hawkins now with my horse, and Mr. Rivers and Miss Arnold are ready mounted and waiting for us."

"So we'll leave you to the tender mercies of the elements, and shall expect you to report to us later on. Best wishes," said Mr. Hawleigh, and with a smiling nod, he and Miss Rivers hurried off to the carriage.

"I came back as soon as I could," Mr. Haw-

kins said, after he had dismounted, and looking down at Maud with handsome, dancing eyes; then, quickly tossing the bridles over the horses' necks, he left them to their own devices and came up to her.

"What if it should rain, Maud?" he said, glancing up at the sky. "I was about to suggest that you go in the carriage, for I would not have you get a ducking and then get sick as a reason of it. I should never forgive myself."

"No, I'm not going in the carriage unless you wish to get rid of me, and are not willing to accept the responsibility of—" she hesitated with a pretty pout, then looked up at him with smiling innocence.

Charlie Hawkins laughed. "Ah, you know better, Maud. You couldn't say it—and—don't—try to think it."

A few moments they stood facing the radiant, sun-filled east, while its refulgent glory fell around them, and turned to rings of gold Maud's sunny forehead curls.

"See, they have left us, and we are all alone in the sublime solitude of the mountains." She smiled, and pointed to the spot where the retreating party had lately been.

Without a word he brought the horses forward, stooped and lifted her to the saddle, and, as they were leaving the majestic scene behind, he said—

"Look back, Maud, and let us never forget this lovely spot. I have found my Minnehaha and you your Hiawatha."

"There is no danger I shall ever forget," she said, smiling. And then he slowly repeated, as they descended the mountain slope—

"As unto the bow the cord is,
So unto the man is woman;
Though she bends him she obeys him,
Though she draws him, yet she follows
Useless each without the other."

The sun was shining gloriously in the valley below.

CHAPTER XVII.

That evening a brilliant reception, the last of the season, was given by a number of young men in honor of the lady visitors at the Springs. The spacious dining-room, which had been temporarily converted into a reception-room, was beautifully and elaborately decorated for the occasion with exquisite floral designs and evergreens, while great palms in ornamental pots were artistically arranged about the music stand.

It was at a rather late hour, when Miss Exum, attired in gauzy silvery draperies of white and blue artfully combined, and which left her white throat and arms bare, knocked at Miss Rivers' door, waited, then knocked again, but receiving no answer, and presuming that the maid was still busying herself with her mistress' toilet, turned and descended the broad stairs. In the brightly lighted hall below she found Mr. Hawkins eagerly awaiting her appearance. The sound of gay laughter and throbbing music floated out on the warm fragrant air, penetrating her with its sweet pathos and kindling a keener appetite for present pleasures and enjoyment, and unconsciously she nodded her pretty head with an air of profound appreciation.

"Welcome at last!" Mr. Hawkins said, his eyes all aglow with youthful gladness, and his lips curled with a gay smile at the sight of the nymphlike vision which floated down before him.

"I reproach myself for having exhausted your patience," she said gaily, greeting him. "Do forgive me."

"Oh, that is all right now that you've come," he said brightly. "Now we'll finish the day so auspiciously begun, with music, moonlight and merry-making." He drew her gloved hand through his arm, holding the fragile fingers close in his, and turned toward the veranda, which was already invaded with scores of young people promenading and chatting and flitting in and out through the open windows. She stopped suddenly, and with a brilliant smile, held up her disengaged hand, and made a sign of negation.

"No, not now. Let us go into the reception-room and indulge in its 'foibles and follies and frailties.'"

Never before did Maud's joyous spirit have freer reins—never before did she so completely surrender herself to the fleeting pleasures of the hour; never before had she been so intoxicated and held in delightful subjection by music and motion, and when, an hour later, after dancing set after set with different partners, Mr. Hawkins returned to claim another waltz, she laughingly declared that she could not take another step—that she was satiated at last, even with the charm of the waltz, the melody of music, the fragrance of the flowers; but she gladly took his arm and strolled on the moonlit veranda, leaving the subdued hum and murmur of voices and the empty pleasures of the reception-room behind them. Once out in the fresh cool air, she instantly felt revived and refreshed, and after half an hour's promenade, she was quite herself again.

They did not return to the reception-room again during the evening, but went into the dimly-lighted parlor, which was very quiet now

and seemed entirely deserted, but as they entered some one rose at the farther end of the room and came toward them.

In the uncertain twilight they did not recognize friend or stranger, till they drew closer to him.

"Why, Hawleigh, old fellow, what are you doing in here—all alone, too. Haven't seen you the whole evening. Completely shelved yourself, have you?" said Mr. Hawkins, slapping him on the shoulder. "What have you been doing with yourself? Let us sit down here by the window, and I want that you should render an account."

"And how we've missed you!" Maud impulsively broke forth, and she offered him her hand. "And your friends, Mrs. Grayson and Miss Arnold?" she asked; "where are they? What charming people they are—but Miss Arnold, well she's just the loveliest creature I ever saw. I am never tired of looking at her. By the way, why are they not present this evening?"

Mr. Hawleigh looked at her in well-bred surprise. "Mrs. Grayson and Miss Arnold are both in mourning, you are aware; Miss Arnold recently, and would not be expected to participate in an occasion of this kind. In fact, I don't believe they care for such things at any time."

"Why, to be sure I knew they were in mourning. How thoughtless of me to ask such an absurd question," she said, with a provoked laugh. "I'm glad, however, I didn't ask them, or they'd had a right to bracket me with the unpardonably ignorant."

Suddenly she felt her face flush as she sank

back in her seat, and opening her fan with a clash, began to use it vigorously for a moment with a rueful air.

"There's no harm done, Miss Maud, at all events," said Mr. Hawleigh in a consolatory tone, smiling; "and your mistake, which was a very natural one, is by no means reprehensible. Charlie, you asked me how I spent the evening. Mrs. Grayson and Miss Arnold were in here an hour or more; then we had a promenade on the veranda, and, in a quiet way, I've been most delightfully entertained."

"I am glad you have," Mr. Hawkins said, cordially.

"Are they here until the close of the season? I mean Mrs. Grayson and Miss Arnold, of course," asked Maud, whose look of annoyance had relaxed into a brighter expression.

"I think that was Mrs. Grayson's intention, but she tells me that she received letters this afternoon containing news which makes it imperative for her to return home next week. When do you go, Miss Maud?"

"Day after to-morrow. Mamma says positively she can't stay a day longer, as we've been from home since June, and she's dreadfully wearied out rather than rested from her outing. She declares it has been no recreation to her at all, but I tell her I've enjoyed everything enough for us both. Vida goes then, too—day after to-morrow; and—oh, I want to ask you, Mr. Hawleigh, while I think of it. Do you know anything about Mr. Henrique, that mysterious looking stranger who has been with Vida like her shadow all the evening? I don't think he danced with any other lady present, and

when Vida happened to have another partner, he would stand with folded arms and gaze superciliously on with a look of derision levelled at everyone in the room. He may be very nice and all that, but somehow he affects me peculiarly whenever I look at him!" Maud shrugged her pretty shoulders and made a shivering sound through her teeth.

"I'm sorry I can give you no information with regard to Mr. Henrique," said Mr. Hawleigh. "I saw him this afternoon in the office soon after his arrival, and afterwards on his way to the reception-room with Miss Rivers, but I have no acquaintance with him whatever."

Maud fancied she detected a note of disapproval in his tone which implied "neither did he care to have any acquaintance with him."

"Well, I just can't make him out at all," she said slowly, looking out before her into the moonlight, with a reflective light in her soft blue eyes.

"You don't suppose he'd hypnotize any one, do you, pet?" laughed Charlie Hawkins, taking Maud's hand and holding it up caressingly, the magnificent diamond solitaire flashing in the moonlight.

She stared at him for a moment in dismay, then struggled to free her hand, while she looked daggers of protestation at him for this bold action in the presence of another.

"Don't, Maud; please don't; I've told Harry everything. You said I might, and he's almost as happy as I am." He drew her hand which he still held firmly to his lips and kissed it.

"Miss Maud," Mr. Hawleigh said earnestly, "I am very glad this opportunity has been given

me to offer my sincere congratulations. You must know that, as Charlie's lifelong friend, I feel that I am entitled to share his confidence in a matter of such vital importance to him—and to you. Indeed, I assure you, I heartily rejoice with him in his supreme happiness and good fortune in winning so fair a prize. My heart's best wishes for the perfect and continued happiness of you both, could I but put them into words, while true and sincere, might sound like fulsome flattery to you—and perhaps to him, my most esteemed friend who has known me so long."

Like a frightened bird, Maud's first impulse had been to take refuge in flight. A hundred vague purposes crowded upon one another faster than she could form them, but she sat silent and shy in an anguish of indecision, with averted face, yet not shrinking from him while he talked. Her silence made him apprehensive of having wounded her in some way, but when he bent toward her to get a better view of her face she smiled and gave him her hand in the old frank way, while his friend placed the one he held in his cordial clasp, saying;

"There, thank him, darling; my friends are your friends, too, and Harry Hawleigh is one of the best and truest friends I ever had."

"Of course, I thank you, Mr. Hawleigh, for your kind wishes and congratulations; I am very grateful to you, and I hope—you know that—" she faltered with a broken voice, then looked wistfully at her betrothed. "What shall I say, Charlie?" she whispered softly.

"Oh, you dear little one; you pretty shy bird! How lovely you are!" he said involuntarily,

catching her hands with rapture and covering them with kisses. "So you don't know what to say, pet? Well, I suppose I'll have to undertake to make it all right with him. Keep your seat, Harry—don't be going, yet"—this to his friend. "Hold on a little!"

"Thanks; it is late, and I must say good-night to you both." Mr. Hawleigh rose as though he had suddenly thought of the lateness of the hour. He started toward the door, and his friend intercepted him.

"By-the by, Harry, you are not in earnest about leaving to-morrow, are you? Can't you stay over till the day after? I will be glad to have you as my guest—our guest"—he looked mischievously at Maud.

"More than obliged, Charlie, but it is out of the question. I must go to-morrow—my vacation is over then. You'll stop in Asheville a day or two, I suppose?"

"Can't do it, thanks. Am obliged to be in Richmond by Monday." He glanced at Maud—"I wanted to go with this little girl home—all the way to Atlanta—but she just wouldn't hear to it. 'Business before pleasure,' and all that sort of thing, she urged upon me, so I've got to submit to authority and obey orders now."

Harry Hawleigh laughed. "Well, it is the very wisest thing you can do, Charlie. But I really must be going." He held out his hand to Maud; "Good-bye, Miss Maud! my best wishes for your happiness, and I trust we shall meet again before a great while. Charlie, I'll see you in the morning, before I get off. Good-night."

"Good-night, Harry," and the next moment he was gone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The next day passed pretty much like many days which had gone before, but all too rapidly for at least two of the happy guests who were to take their departure in a few short hours from this charming Arcadia.

The ladies had spent the morning on the lawn, some idling over their fancy work and sketching, others reading or playing tennis or ten-pins, while the gentlemen, or those who did not participate in these too active pastimes—having due regard to the state of the weather—lounged and lingered over their cigars in some shady spot, seemingly indifferent to all mankind and distracting cares, but keenly enjoying that sense of tranquil charm and content, that state of acquiescent repose, soon enough to be disturbed when they had returned to the excitement and busy routine of their every-day life.

Mr. Hawleigh had made his adieux and departed hours ago, and a sense of his absence imparted a tinge of sadness to the feelings of his many friends left behind. Amongst the group gathered on the lawn that day, the conversation turned upon the changes each would soon make, and as Maud had said, "The very atmosphere breathed of vague farewells too painful to be spoken."

"To me there is nothing more painful," said Charlie Hawkins, "than this breaking up of new and pleasant associations, a severing of friendly ties that we make in our summer journeyings hither and thither. I cannot help wishing that I shall meet again all the charming

people I come across in my holiday wanderings; and yet, it rarely happens that a good wind blows any of the same summer friends together again."

"By the way, Hawkins," said Mr. Rivers, turning to him for a change of subject, "whatever became of that young fellow we met up in the mountains of Virginia last summer? A sort of protege of yours, wasn't he? Somehow he came into my head just now. He was a courageous, talented young fellow, and had undoubtedly artistic ability."

"Whom do you mean? That young fellow who was sketching some scenes around the White Sulphur Springs?" asked Mr. Hawkins, absently. "There were several of them, if I remember correctly, but I suppose you have reference to Cecil Brian."

"Yes, I think that was his name. Don't see how you could forget him. My recollection is that you took quite a fancy to him and he to you."

Mr. Hawkins looked at Mr. Rivers a moment in silence as if he were thinking, and then said:

"He went to Europe this summer to complete his studies, or to take lessons in painting, and, I've no doubt will do first-rate. Yes, he has decided talent, and I believe will make a name for himself some day."

"Pardon me, but are you speaking of Cecil Brian, the artist?" Mrs. Grayson asked, pausing in the midst of her low side talk with Miss Rivers and Ruth, and turning suddenly round.

"The same, Madam," returned Mr. Hawkins, puzzled to know why she asked.

"Well, if you are a particular friend of his,

I'm quite sure it will give you pleasure to hear very recently from him. I had a letter from my son yesterday, who is now in Germany, and he writes me that he had just received a long letter from Mr. Brian—a letter that was extremely touching. He spoke very feelingly of some kind friend who had helped him to pursue his studies abroad, and said he could never feel sufficiently grateful for his goodness, but hoped that at a future day he might be able to help some young man as he had been helped himself, when he got ahead and had money to spare. He is very much encouraged in his work. At present Mr. Brian is in Paris."

Mr. Hawkins' cheek reddened slightly, involuntarily. "I am indeed glad to hear such encouraging news from Mr. Brian."

He stopped a moment, and resumed as though apologizing or explaining away something:

"Mr. Brian's father, through illness in his family, and other misfortunes, became absolutely unable to assist his son in the completion of his studies, although he knew he had unusual talent, which, if developed, would be to him a means of earning a living, and also helping the family. Knowing that aid at this particular crisis meant so much to him, I—" he hesitated again, being perturbed by the effort he was making to conceal his own generosity, when Miss Rivers, who had been regarding him with judicial eyes, interposed quickly.

"And so you were the generous benefactor, to hold out the helping hand of which he was in such sore need?"

"Oh, what I did was such a little thing, and not worth speaking of," he said hurriedly. "I

think it is a pity that there are so many true stories of fine talents, cramped opportunities and courageous efforts lost to the world, simply because in this busy life of many calls upon time and purse, the ever generous public cannot be made acquainted with the special features of such cases. I often wish that I were able to help many a deserving bread-winner, struggling on the journey of life trying to make his way—even though it were but a little," he said frankly and enthusiastically. "You were speaking of your son a few moments ago, Mrs. Grayson; may I ask his name?"

"Carl—Carl Grayson."

"Is it possible?" he said eagerly. "How delighted I am that I have met you—Mrs. Grayson—Carl's mother—and to think I shouldn't know until now! He and I were at Chapel Hill together, and a nobler heart never beat, and a better friend I never had. Why the fellows at the University fairly lionzied him; he held his own in the good graces of all the Professors, too, and if he were not just what he is, he would be unworthy such a mother."

Mrs. Grayson laughed. "Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. You must know that it is very pleasant to me—his mother—to hear you speak so cordially of my son. When I write Carl I shall tell him that I met you, and how kindly you remembered him. I've no doubt he'll be pleased to hear from you."

"You are very kind, and I could burden you with messages for him, but if you will be good enough to give me his address I will write to him."

As he looked up, Nellie motioned to him not

to give warning. She was coming stealthily up behind Ruth, and presently she laid her little hand over her eyes, drew her head back and imprinted a hearty kiss upon her cheek.

"Nellie! you little rogue! you little hypocrite! I know who you are," said Ruth, pinioning her hands and playfully disengaging herself. "Now what shall I do with you?"

"Come and go with me to dinner, that's just what you can do, Cousin Ruth. There, listen! the band's playing now, and that means for us to hurry. Are you all ready to go?"

"Yes, we are ready," said Miss Rivers, and they all rose at once. "The band is playing 'Home, Sweet Home.' It is said that the man who wrote that song never had a home, but I don't believe it. He certainly must have experienced the delights of one, else he could never have expressed so perfectly the charm that one feels in reaching his own particular haven of rest."

A voice at her elbow made her start and turn round. "Miss Rivers, will you grant me the honor of seeing you to dinner?" It was Mr. Henrique who had brought her speech to a rather abrupt termination. After addressing himself exclusively to her, and bowing to the others, he turned with an air of haughty reserve to Miss Rivers again, and together they led the way across the lawn to the hotel, the others sauntering after them.

"Dear me!" said Maud to Mr. Hawkins, as though she were recovering from a sudden shock. "How strangely the sight of that man affects me. I can almost feel my heart contracting whenever I look at him."

These two had dropped behind, and were out of ear-shot of the others.

"Why, don't look at him," Mr. Hawkins said, laughing; "don't think of him, even. Let us think of something else."

The following day was a dreary one indeed. The whole landscape was transformed as if by magic, and wrapped in a rainy fog.

The mountains were completely blotted out, and wreaths of vaporous mist invaded verandas and even halls, and the atmosphere was such as only natives could breathe with equanimity. The gloom was indescribable, and everyone seemed to feel its depressing effect.

Ruth was standing beside the window looking cut on the wavering mist which enveloped everything under its gray veil—wrapping trees, and cottages, and lawn in the same misty, cheerless drizzle. Under the outward pall, the rolling rain clouds had massed themselves together and presently descended in good earnest. From the eaves of the hotel and cottages, she could hear the water steadily dripping, and somewhere through the gray mist seemed to come an eddying, gurgling sound as of impetuous water leaping downward from rugged crags.

Nellie ran to her and caught her by the arm. "Oh, Cousin Ruth, did you hear what mamma said? We are going home—going to-morrow! Aren't you glad? Mamma is writing the telegram now to send to Uncle Ralph, and I'm going for Julia now to come and pack the trunks. I don't believe you care at all—and, oh! me, I am so glad! Kiss me, Cousin Ruth, and let me go."

Ruth took her in her arms and kissed her

with more than her usual warmth, for she was aware that Nellie had been the direct cause of lifting the burden from her own sorely depressed heart. She roused herself and became eager all at once—quite as eager as Nellie to return home without delay.

"I had been thinking, my dear," said Mrs. Grayson to Ruth as soon as Nellie had left the room, "since I received Ralph's letter on yesterday, that it would be best for me to return immediately, although he rather insisted that we should remain here until next week. But, now that the rain has set in, and may continue indefinitely, for several days perhaps, I have changed my plans and decided to return home to-morrow. I am going to the office now to send this telegram to Ralph," she continued, rising and moving toward the door with the slip of paper in her hand, "and if Julia comes in my absence, will you mind superintending the packing until I return? I shall not be gone long."

"Certainly not, Mrs. Grayson," she answered promptly. "I shall be very glad to assist her. I have nothing else to do." Mrs. Grayson stood lost in thought a moment, came back and kissed her, then went out closing the door softly behind her.

"Home!" Ruth said aloud when she was left alone. "Home!" she repeated, the sweet word rolling goldenly out, making music in her heart and effacing every other thought. She was glad that the wanderings for a time were over, and the new life in which so much lay hidden, and with which she must henceforth courageously wrestle, was already begun.

CHAPTER XIX.

A week had passed since Mrs. Grayson, Ruth and Nellie had returned from the mountains, and during that time Mrs. Grayson had been almost constantly engaged with the countless duties and demands on her time which seemed awaiting her.

Ruth had received a long letter from Agnes. With eager fingers she broke the seal, never once dreaming that it would contain aught but the most pleasant news. But, after reading the first few lines, she found it was filled with many tearful regrets, urging her friend to resign herself to disappointment and no longer cherish any expectation of seeing her soon. "On account of important business matters," she wrote, her father had been suddenly summoned home, and doubtless before this letter reached her they would be on their long journey to the far West. Ruth read this letter hurriedly, almost breathlessly, to the end, with only a vague, half-heedful sense of its meaning—then she began at the first and read more leisurely with a sort of passive calm as the undoubted facts dawned clearly upon her; yet so sharp was the pang of disappointment which held her, that in spite of all the efforts to repress her feelings she broke down in a burst of burning tears.

The sun was near its setting, and all the earth was bathed in the brilliant and imperial glories that attend the gorgeous closing of a summer day. Blending rays of delicate pink and luminous waves of gold stretched across the sky, steeping in light the fine network of pearl-white

clouds that rose upon the horizon, all glowing in silvery radiance and making soft harmonies in earth and sky. The balmy south wind stirred amongst the creamy roses twining up the trellis, and shook their rich fragrance out upon the air; and while the mellow amber light grew deeper and clearer, the bees had ceased their monotonous hum and gone to sleep in the heart of the dewy flowers. As the day stole onward to its close, softly from the far distance swung the resonant chime of an evening bell. One by one the silvery strokes rang out on the evening air, but so absorbed was Ruth in retrospection that she seemed to heed it not—neither was she aware that Mrs. Grayson had approached her until she laid her hand upon her bowed head and her gentle voice roused her from her reverie.

"Ruth, child, I have just finished reading Agnes' letter, and have given it to Ralph to read. I know that you are disappointed that Agnes is not coming to visit you now; it is natural that you should be; but when she does come—which, let us hope, will be before a great while—the enjoyment of her visit will be none the less keen because you are deprived of it at this time. I have often found more real joy in the anticipation of some promised pleasure than in the realization of the pleasure itself. But, after all, my dear, this is one of the little trials which one can learn to bear patiently. Strength, we know, is shown in our ability not to meet the great trials of life, but in the petty annoyances that make up each day's experience. Don't you believe this, my dear?" She drew a chair near Ruth and sat down.

"Yes, I believe it, Mrs. Grayson; I know you

are right, as you always are, but when I read Agnes' letter and found that she was not coming, but going home—back to my old home without seeing her again, somehow the recollection of the past, papa's death, and all the old associations which I left behind, came up before me, and then such a sick pain, such a sense of utter desolation seemed to crush me down that I could not help shedding tears." Ruth smiled faintly, though tears glistened in her eyes, and they had that quivering droop which made them at times so pathetic.

"I know, dear, I know," said Mrs. Grayson quickly, but tenderly: "I'm not blaming you. On the contrary, I sympathize with you most deeply." She took Ruth's hand which rested on the arm of the chair, and began stroking it in her gentle way. "I know from experience that human sympathy is very sweet, and helps to soften our griefs, and encourages us, too, to bear them with calmer resignation. God does indeed try us severely sometimes, but never beyond what we are able to bear; and we must try to listen patiently to the lesson He would teach us in sending one trial, even though a small one, or He may visit us twice with perhaps a greater one."

"Mrs. Grayson, I wish I had your sweet, humble faith and patient resignation. I have too much cause for thankfulness to ever murmur or repine, and I'm ashamed that I semeed to do so now; but believe me, I did not mean to be ungrateful, for my heart is full of gratitude to God for giving me such a lovely Christian home, and such a dear sweet friend as you."

As she spoke the last word, Dr. Leslie crossed

the veranda and joined them. Ruth could not long resist the subtle charm of his strong, bright, sunny presence. There was something in the firm moral rectitude of his nature, that which her nature demanded, and without taking counsel of her own heart, or perhaps it was unconsciously, she yielded assent and allegiance to this warm and potent personality whose influence over her grew stronger day by day.

She rose and offered him her chair.

"No, thank you, Ruth; keep your seat. I do not care to sit down. It is such a splendid afternoon I was about to propose a short drive for you, or is it too late?" he asked, turning to Mrs. Grayson. "Nellie is through with her riding lesson, and Virgil can have the pony phaeton round in a few minutes." Seeing that Ruth hesitated, he said, "Well, if it is too late to go this afternoon, and I'm at leisure, don't you think you would like to go in the morning?" He looked at Ruth again.

"I thank you very much, Dr. Leslie. I should have been glad to have gone this afternoon; but as it is, I'm afraid I cannot. I am not feeling very well, and had just thought of asking Mrs. Grayson's permission to retire. And to-morrow morning Mrs. Grayson has promised to take me to the Academy to make arrangements about entering me as a pupil, and as the opening exercises begin then, I should like to go very early, though I shall not enter as a boarding pupil until next Monday."

"Well, in that case, I suppose I must be content to wait indefinitely," he returned with a pleasant laugh.

"A very admirable thing about this school,"

Dr. Leslie supplemented, "and one which elicits true applause from all practical, common-sense people, is that the physical development of the pupils is not neglected. Principal Cordell recognized the fact that good health outweighs all other considerations—that upon it everything depends —and so the pupils are taught practically the value of outdoor exercise. The physical training is as much a part of their education as the mental, and one is not sacrificed at the expense of the other."

"The pupils certainly have most delightful grounds in which to exercise, too," said Mrs. Grayson. "A stranger passing the Academy does not dream that it conceals one of the most charming enclosures to be found anywhere in the State. If we will make an early start in the morning, perhaps we shall have an opportunity to go through it. It is very picturesque and romantic, and is kept in the most perfect order the year round."

"How far is it from the Academy?" Ruth asked, turning to Mrs. Grayson.

"Oh, just in the rear of the Academy buildings, and covers quite a large area—some thirty five acres."

"Yes, I can tell you the playgrounds are just lovely, Cousin Ruth," said Nellie, who had come up unobserved; "but you can't go in there without a teacher. There are fountains and flowers and great tall trees, and shady walks and tennis courts and a real live deer. Now, Mamma, you must let me go with you and Cousin Ruth to-morrow. I do so want to play with that deer." Nellie clapped her hands as the prospective enjoyment floated before her.

"Is Cousin Ruth going to school at the Academy?" she asked, with an expression of surprised interest, tinged with doubt.

"Yes, and we'll miss her very much, won't we?"

"I should think we would; but she's not going to board in the Academy, is she? No, sir; we just can't give Cousin Ruth up. I won't let her go—will you, Uncle Ralph?"

Ruth gave her guardian a shy, upward glance as Nellie asked the question.

"Yes," he said, "she is to board in the school. Principal Cordell thinks this plan is best, even for pupils residing in town, and then your Cousin Ruth prefers it."

The next morning when Ruth woke a fugitive sunbeam was peeping in through the half shuttered window. She rose quickly, threw the shutter wide open to let in the perfumed air, and to fill the room with the warm, bright sunlight.

There was not even one white cloud in the blue sky, and as she stood for a moment admiring the lovely view from her window, her eyes wandered off to the blue peak of the old Pilot, which always seemed to fill her soul with a calm and solemn awe. There it stood, ever unchangeable; whether touched by the fleecy wings of the morning clouds, or piercing the skies at noon, or reposing in the mellow tints of evening; whether bathed in the pale light of the moon, or enveloped in the surges of the tempest, with the lightning flashing around its brow, it stood ever the same.

Immediately breakfast was over, Virgil had the phaeton at the door, and Mrs. Grayson, Ruth

and Nellie were soon on their way to the Academy. They had scarcely stopped in front of the Principal's residence than Nellie jumped down and leaving Mrs. Grayson and Ruth to follow, ran quickly up the narrow stone steps and sounded the knocker. Just then there was one emphatic stroke from the old town clock, and at the same instant Principal Cordell opened the door preparatory to going out.

"The hour for the preliminary exercises at the opening of our school," he explained to Mrs. Grayson after greeting her and Ruth, "and if you and Miss Arnold care to go over to the chapel, we shall be pleased to have you with us on this occasion."

His manner was very courteous, and even cordial, but without the least trace of effusion.

"Thank you; not this morning," said Mrs. Grayson, smiling and extending her hand to bid him good-bye. "I know your rules about being prompt, so I'll not detain you. Ruth and Nellie wish to see the park and playgrounds in the rear of the Academy, and if they are open to visitors this morning, we wish your permission to go through them."

"Certainly, and if you will come with me to the Academy, I will have Miss Brodie, one of our teachers, to conduct you over the grounds, and afterwards through the buildings, if you wish."

When Miss Brodie came, and Principal Cordell had excused himself, Mrs. Grayson turned to Miss Brodie and said;

"It is a great kindness in you to go with us, and one, I assure you, we appreciate very much; but I hope we have not imposed a troublesome

duty upon you in making this request of Principal Cordell."

"Oh, not at all. We are always glad to show visitors and strangers that which we appreciate so much ourselves, and custom has made it common with us to do so," she said, with graceful courtesy. "Come this way, if you please."

They passed through a narrow hallway, which opened out upon a long veranda, and this upon a quadrangle or square court, exquisitely kept, and in the center of which played a beautiful fountain, surrounded by feathery ferns and moss-encrusted rocks, most picturesquely grouped. Near by a magnificent weeping willow swayed its long, graceful branches, while underneath its delicate shade, with broad sun-shafts falling through, rustic seats and swings were conveniently arranged for the pleasure of the pupils. The morning glory of an early autumn day was over the scene, which was a most enchanting and peaceful one.

Then they crossed the quadrangle and passed down a graveled path, bordered with iron chairs set in line, and thence on through an open gateway in a high, ivy-covered wall, which divided the beautiful court square from the playgrounds proper.

Here and there the mellow brick work shone through the dark glossy leaves of ivy and periwinkle which trailed over it and hung in graceful festoons from its sides.

Passing down the flight of moss-grown steps, they followed one of the clean pebbled walks winding around the turfed terrace, and this soon brought them to a trellised summer-house

perched high upon a hill-side and with a long flight of wooden steps leading up to it.

With an exclamation of delight, Nellie ran quickly up to the top steps, then stood breathing quick and trying to get her breath again. But finding that she was alone, she suddenly changed her mind and came bounding down the stairs, making frantic gestures to her mother and Ruth not to leave her. She soon joined them, however, where they stood watching the gleaming spray of a pretty fountain that shot high up in the golden sunlight, then fell like powdered silver dust over the ferns and grasses beneath.

Through the dew-dripping trees and shrubberies they could see another fountain sending up its silvery jet in which the brilliant sunbeams twirled and trembled.

Turning to the right, they strolled past a high, velvety green bluff, known as Lovers' Leap, and upon which rose in somber majesty a trio of grand old poplars, above those of ordinary growth, like giants among pigmies, and the sunlit sward beneath their lower branches was made still more beautiful by the intangible softness of draperies of vines festooned and swaying from limb to limb; and, here and there, hundreds of milk-white gauzy hammocks which the cunning spiders had contrived to suspend in the humid air. Then on they passed up a gentle slope and through a grove of splendid trees, fresh and cool, and almost as shadowy as twilight even at midday—past the tennis courts and croquet grounds, and, reaching a little knoll in a clear space, they stopped, turned and looked back across the lovely landscape over which lingered a soft, magical

haze, changing the whole into a scene of mystery and enchantment.

The great serenity of the place, the softly changing green which covered its entire extent, the undulating, exquisite line of little hills, the lovely vistas, the tall grasses and ferns making obeisance to the glinting waters of the rippling brook as a languid wind swept over them, was something unspeakably beautiful and wondrously enchanting. If no more loveliness than this charming view could give were added to one's inner life, surely a pilgrimage to the old Moravian town would be fully requited. This union of taste and elegance was like a dream—a vision of fairyland.

Just visible through the thick foliage of trees on the left, with a half obliterated pathway leading up to it, stood a large wooden pavilion in detached solitude, and grown dilapidated perhaps from long disuse, for upon the warped shingle roof and once stately pillars supporting it, mosses had crept and lichens gathered. Some weather-stained benches which ran along three sides of the platform, and which were still upright and firm, were powdered with gray dust and strewn with pieces of dead twigs blown thither from the overshadowing branches of the encircling trees.

A long wooden table, standing in the center of the floor, was elaborately covered with curious carving and mysterious hieroglyphics, traced years ago by the delicate hand of some fair young girl, who, perhaps, had long since passed away into the eternal silence.

As Ruth bent and studied in vain to decipher the cabalistic lines, which had doubtless passed

through so many changing crucibles of thought, she sighed half unconsciously and turned away. Somehow a curious charm brooded over this quiet spot where Nature had overcome the pruning knife of the keeper, but it seemed sad and dreary. Beyond was the wide-rolling stretch of the park-like woods with its stately trees, and here, too, Nature seemed to have her own way still.

Again they sauntered on, passing many romantic spots about which clustered countless old sweet memories—Mrs. Grayson and Miss Brodie talking all the while, and Mrs. Grayson, apparently inspired by the reality of the present scene, recalled with delight various pleasing incidents of her old school-days when she had spent so many happy hours beneath the shade of these great oaks, affording glimpses of numerous vistas through their green foliage, and which, to her, had all the glamour of the past still surrounding them.

After descending the gentle slope, they returned by a different way, and bearing to the right, in front of them, across a low fence sunk in coarse grass and tangled undergrowth, and lying warm and sheltered on a southeasterly exposure, was Dr. Balbec's lily pond, where the first *Victoria Regia*, that rarest of aquatic plants, was known to prosper and bloom in the open air.

Wafts of cool breezes, laden with the rich, sweet scent of flowers, drifted across to them. To Mrs. Grayson there was something in the subtle fragrance which seemed to touch with electric force some slumbering sense of memory, and lo! what a host of vague and tender recollections

stole back upon her, invisible images which she had thought forever effaced from memory for a brief moment revived and stood out clear and vivid before her, and while she tried to grasp the picture—to hold it in view yet longer and enjoy it—it suddenly vanished out of sight.

When they turned to leave the dear old playground, somewhere from amongst the shining leafage of a tall tree came the pure liquid notes —each one clear and detached—of a Baltimore Oriole, that shy, pretty bird which loves best to pour out its sweetest song in seclusion, or in the deep solitude of the wood. It was as sweet a sound as the plashing noise of cool raindrops on the shimmering surface of rippling waters. Ruth stopped and listened.

"How beautiful," she said. "That is the sweetest singer yet."

Miss Brodie led the way back to the main building of the Academy, explaining to Ruth everything as they passed on through the broad corridors with their exquisitely clean rubber-muffled floors, visited the bright, cheerful study-rooms, passed on through the large libraries with their well-filled shelves, then up through the white-curtained dormitories with their spotless single beds, and here, as in all other portions of the large, airy building, everything was scrupulously clean and in the most perfect order.

A few minutes later, when they returned to the hall below, it was nearly twelve o'clock.

"Miss Arnold, I suppose you will be with us on Monday?" said Miss Brodie, on bidding her good-bye.

"Yes, that is my intention now," she answered.

Nellie babbled on all the way home, filling up the intervals where there would have been silence, and as soon as the carriage stopped she lost no time making her exit therefrom, to greet her Uncle Ralph, who was standing on the steps of the veranda ready to receive them.

CHAPTER XX.

In her deep sympathy for the poor, Mrs. Grayson had often tried to formulate some effective way of helping them without the help rendered taking the form of charity and patronage. Her mind teemed with half-formed plans and purposes, which, the longer she dwelt upon them, began to assume visible and tangible shape. The difficulties vanished the more her enthusiasm increased. "If we only had a Woman's Exchange, or some such organization," she mused, "the problem of relief for them might be partially solved, at least."

She had a growing belief in the success of just such a benevolent enterprise in her own city. Indeed, she believed it was a necessity in the community, and would prove a great benefit to women obliged by adverse circumstances to make their accomplishments or practical knowledge remunerative.

An Exchange such as she had in her mind would mean burdens lightened that are otherwise almost unbearable; it would mean healthy independence instead of support hard to receive and often unwillingly given; it would mean comfort in many homes where actual want or dreary dissatisfaction now existed.

With the conviction momentarily growing stronger, that the time had come when such a delicate and beautiful charity was a positive necessity in the city, she determined she would make the attempt at whatever pecuniary cost to herself to undertake the project, and with the aid of several well-known philanthropic ladies

whom she knew to be interested in this work, they would begin in a modest way and with perseverance as a helper what might they not accomplish? There were numbers of ladies all over the city who excelled in every variety of dainty handicraft, uesful as well as ornamental, and the articles received at the Exchange would include decorative work of all kinds in painting and embroidery, fine needlework, german and dinner favors, and, in fact, they would be prepared to fill orders for anything that a woman can make. The value should be put upon all goods by the consignors themselves, ten per cent of the price received being retained by the Society, and the work all done by the women in their homes. The payment of a fee of five dollars would entitle a person to send the work of three ladies for one year. She determined, too, that the enterprise should be of such a high character that it would bear the scrutiny of the most enlightened criticism, even at this time when people have learned to distinguish so accurately between the charity which helps and that which only harms its recipients.

Then she began to look about for a desirable locality, and a suitable room to begin operations in—a room where their handiwork might be exhibited and sold. She finally decided upon a salesroom down town in a good neighborhood, in which she thought they could make a beginning. It wasn't exactly the thing she wanted, but she concluded to take it, unless something better was provided. The room she had in mind was a rather long, narrow one, not as light, perhaps, as it should be; neither was it remarkable for its height. Yet it was cheerful looking, and

with all its limitations it possessed certain possibilities which could be developed and utilized very nicely. She resolved to talk with her brother about it as soon as she reached home, or immediately after supper when they were less likely to be interrupted; and, as Dr. Leslie was in thorough sympathy with every movement that tended toward the betterment and promotion of woman's work, she was sure of his practical aid and cooperation in this enterprise.

Dr. Leslie was in the sitting-room when Mrs. Grayson returned from a drive she had taken with this matter in view.

"What kept you so, Helen?" he asked a little anxiously, knowing, however, that she had some good reason.

"Mrs. Nelson and myself were talking, and I did not dream it was so late. Then I drove to South Side to see old Mrs. Donaldson, as I promised, and to find out what she needed. She is able to get about again. But Mrs. Nelson," she said, going back to her again, "I do feel so sorry for her. The poor woman is so troubled and depressed, and can't seem to brighten up any more. I want so much to do something to help her—to try to lighten her burdens," replied Mrs. Grayson, taking off her hat.

"Did she say anything about Mr. Nelson, how he likes his place, and how he is getting on?"

"Oh, yes; and she asked me to thank you, too, for your kindness in getting him the place, and I'm sure she appreciates it very much. I'm afraid, however, from something she said, that she hasn't much confidence in his retaining the position long."

Dr. Leslie looked up with a sudden access of interest, but as Mrs. Grayson did not seem disposed to explain, he said quietly:

"I believe Mr. Nelson is good and kindly at heart, but unfortunately he seems to lack will-power and firmness to stand up bravely and fight against the obstacles that loom up before him. I don't believe he can really help it, or that he even suspects the truth, that he has not the courage to face adversity and try to meet the most sacred obligations which his family ties impose upon him. I am sure he wants to do, he wants to succeed, but somehow it seems all his efforts are futile. I do hope he may be able to keep his present situation," Dr. Leslie concluded, earnestly.

"Yes, so do I. But come, we'll go to supper now, and afterwards I have something to talk with you about of great importance"—she looked at him, smiling—"something I've been thinking about so seriously this afternoon that it has quite crowded everything else out of my mind, and I must get rid of it."

Dr. Leslie went to the sitting-room as soon as he had finished his supper.

Mrs. Grayson sat down on one of the low easy chairs near him, and resting her arm upon the table, regarded him half seriously, half hesitatingly, as though she were studying his mood and trying to divine how her scheme would impress him.

"Now for business," she said; "and I'll try not to bore you, but will outline my pet project as briefly as I can." Her words were low and deliberate, and her voice recalled him. He raised his head and nodded slightly.

"Well, let us hear the 'important matter.'" I am here to listen, to suggest and to help if I can," he said, smiling and placing himself in a responsive attitude. "If it is about some new benevolent scheme you have on hand—and I more than half suspect it is—you know beforehand my unconditional loyalty to what is good and helpful, and you may count upon my cooperation and support. I shall not fail you," he said encouragingly.

"Thank you. . I knew you would help. Yes, this is an enormously important matter to me, and to hundreds of others whom I would reach." And with new courage she went on to explain her plans in detail.

"Upon my word, Helen," he said, smiling, "you are a very proper person to plead in behalf of benevolent work. But there is one thing," he went on in his quiet, business-like way when the tide of Mrs. Grayson's enthusiasm had ebbed for a moment, "that you seem not to have thought of yet, and that is a suitable and properly equipped building for your business."

"Ah, yes I have," she said quickly; "and I was coming to that, and that is just where I want your help. You know that one can't, at a single bound, and especially in an enterprise of this kind, reach the goal at once. It is the steady climb upward, with hearty cooperation among men and women in philanthropic work that will insure success in this scheme. Once started, and as the work increases, we hope to add new interests and new departments, and fill several rooms with beautiful and salable articles both useful and decorative. I have taken a gen-

eral survey of the field, and then thoroughly considered all the details of the work. It is feasible, it is practical, it is common-sense. Now tell me, why shouldn't it have a fair trial, at least?"

"By the way of suggestion I would say, what you want first is to interest several other leaders who will join you in this work—men and women who have means as well as social position and influence, and if you can infect them with your hope, energy and enthusiasm, why I believe you will succeed in making this thing an actual fact; and once started, I think —yes, I am pretty certain—it will become a gratifying success, an incalculably potent factor, and a moral and financial support, which shall enable many an excellent woman to maintain her self-respect by supporting herself and perhaps others dependent upon her when adversity makes it necessary."

Mrs. Grayson looked at him with beaming eyes. "How kind of you Ralph—that is just like yourself to say so. I thought you would agree with me, and I am so glad you can see our needs and sympathize with us."

Then she rose and went to the escritoire in the room, and returned with a pencil and sheet of note paper.

"Yes, you may put me down for five hundred dollars for the first two years, and more if needed," Dr. Leslie said, smiling, and answering this movement of his sister. "I shall show my faith by my works, or gifts."

"Oh, I am not going to canvass for subscriptions or contributions this evening," she laughed, sitting down very deliberately; "but to give

you some idea on paper what my plans are. However, I'll accept your contribution with many thanks, as a nucleus, and which I must say is a most generous one." She looked up at him and said in an impressive tone, "How very practical you are, Ralph; and if I could find a few others equally so, I should have no fears for the success of my project. But I'll not discuss the subject further this evening, but wait until I see others and make them understand what we want—what we need."

She sat down again, after putting away the paper and pencil, took up a Bible which lay upon the table and handed it to him. He took it reverently from her hands, and after turning a few pages, began to read a short Psalm.

After these devotional exercises were over, Mrs. Grayson rose to leave the room, but paused, looking down at the pile of books near her brother. "I suppose you are going to read awhile," she said.

"Yes, these are some new medical works I ordered, and they came to-day. I wish to glance over one or two of them before retiring." He took out his watch and looked at the time. "Ten o'clock already; but I can give them an hour's time at least."

"Do you think you'll restrict yourself to that?" said Mrs. Grayson, smiling, and her smile had in it a touch of friendly reproach.

"You physicians talk to us about need of rest, and caution us against physical exhaustion and overwork; but when it comes to practice for yourselves, you take refuge forthwith in plausible excuses. I'm sure you must be tired after to-day's work, so I would prescribe rest for you,

as you so often do for me, and quite as often when I do not need it," she said, smiling. "But I am going now, and leave you to the enjoyment of your task, and not take any more of your time. Good-night." She thought she heard him sigh deeply as she turned away and left him alone.

CHAPTER XXI.

The crisp, delicious days of autumn, with their pervading Indian summer haze and glinting sunshine playing mistily over the sleeping wood, and effacing the dividing line of earth and sky, had come, burdened with all their tender memories of the fading season that pleaded almost pathetically for sweet indulgence in listless reverie or dreamy idleness.

Carl and Agnes wrote promptly and regularly. The latter to Ruth, who always sent her letters to Mrs. Grayson to read. In her last long and expansive communication Agnes had vaguely hinted of a foreign tour and of a probability of meeting Carl the ensuing summer, but it was in her pleasant gossipy way, with nothing definitely outlined, simply an underlying suggestion of a hope that she might some day realize.

Mrs. Grayson had received a letter from Maud Exum, too—her acquaintance of the summer—and soon after handsome invitations to her marriage with Mr. Hawkins had followed for herself and Ruth.

Ruth had been home but once since she entered the Academy. It was in November, the occasion being Nellie's birthday party, at which event she had promised Nellie some weeks previous to be present.

The winter and spring passed rapidly away, filled with the thousand subtle forces of an ever changing world, but bringing no notable changes or events in the lives of those concerned.

It was in June, soon after the commencement at the Academy, that Ruth received a letter

from Agnes, dated St. Denis Hotel, New York. The first few sentences told of their arrival in the city, and then ran on in the usual style of rhapsody that school-girls affect. "Don't think, my darling, I am trying to test your powers of endurance and long suffering, as well as your faith in my love and devotion for you, for I am sure there must be limitations even to your generous nature, unless you are more than mortal. I have been promising you a visit so long, and looking forward with so much pleasure to our meeting, that it seems almost heartless and inconsistent—yes, even paradoxical—for me to write you from this proximity that, instead of hurrying to you, as I so long to do, I am fleeing further away from you, and for an indefinite time. It is settled at last that we—that is, papa, mamma and myself—are going abroad, and we sail to-morrow. I think you will rejoice with me that I am about to realize actually the dream which has haunted me so long. I can hardly believe yet that it is really true. We hope to have Carl with us during his vacation, and you know I am quite wild to see this handsome cousin of mine, to whom I am said to bear so striking a resemblance. How I wish that you were going with us. What lovely times and experiences we should have together. I don't like to think of going and leaving you behind. You must let me hear from you soon through one of your nice, long letters, and remember that I shall not see anything in my travels that I will enjoy more. With a great deal of love for yourself, Cousin Helen and Cousin Ralph, your loving friend, Agnes."

Ruth read this over several times, and then

with mingled emotions took it to Mrs. Grayson. As she read the last page of it, Ruth was watching her, and she did not fail to interpret aright the look that came to her face. Presently a tear stole down her cheek and dropped upon the letter. Then she slowly folded it, handed it back to Ruth, and without saying a word rose, kissed her and quietly left the room. That silent kiss expressed much more than words to Ruth.

She knew it was the allusion in Agnes' letter to Carl that had caused her tears to start, and she would have liked to say something gentle and comforting to Mrs. Grayson at that moment, but a feeling of diffidence held her back.

Gradually the days grew more chilly and wintry, and when the first gray dawn broke on Christmas Eve, the ground showed a light powdering of snow that had fallen during the night. But as the morning advanced a rosy light crept along the east and gave promise of a sunlit day. By ten o'clock the prophetic promise was fulfilled. The sun was shining with a cold white glittering brightness, while a sharp wind drove the fleecy clouds in an aerial race across the pale blue sky.

Ruth had come home to spend the Christmas holidays, and half an hour after breakfast that morning, when she went to the sitting-room, her guardian was standing on the rug in front of the grate with his hands folded behind him, his favorite attitude, which Ruth knew so well.

"Come in, Ruth. Don't run away because I am in here, or I shall be tempted to vacate right away. I don't believe I've seen you but twice since you came home."

"That's because I only came yesterday," she

said laughingly, as she entered the room, "and then I've been assisting Mrs. Grayson with the Christmas decorations. We are quite through, I believe."

How wonderfully beautiful she looked, Dr. Leslie thought.

As he stood watching her, suddenly the whole passionate flood of his love which had been subdued so long, surged up from the very depths of his soul, loosened and swept way the old, peculiar bondship of guardian and ward, and in that supreme moment he forgot the fact—forgot everything save the intense consciousness of his overwhelming love for this incomparably beautiful woman before him, the strength of which love he had never before had the least conception.

Life could hold no greater bliss for him than this. "Ruth, my darling, my darling!" he was silently whispering, to soothe his heart's wild pleadings, while his eyes were still fixed upon her lovely face.

Instinctively, drawn by the magnetism of his gaze, she slowly raised her beautiful eyes to him, and he, looking at her with tenderly bright and penetrating eyes, saw an expression flash across her face—an expression of half conscious wonder and revelation, and suddenly a strange and glorious light broke over his own handsome face, as though it had taken its radiance from the brightness of hers, and his heart leaped with an ecstatic thrill. He saw, too, with a lightning glance, the futile struggle she was making to conceal her sweet, momentous secret, which until this moment she had guarded so well, and which for months he had been longing so miserably to know.

In an instant each seemed to comprehend; in the full sweet meaning of the next few minutes' silence, which seemed to last an eternity, the old life for each had suddenly changed—the old life for each had suddenly ended forever. And now that the inexorable change had come—now that each knew the feelings of the other so well—Dr. Leslie was too frank and honest in his nature, too proud and noble, to seek any subterfuge or concealment; and now, since he possessed the sweet secret of the one woman in all the world to him—involuntarily given up on her part, it is true—there was but one line of wisdom and duty before him, but one right and honorable thing for him to do, and that was to ask her to be his wife, and by the love and beauty and rich graces of her pure life, make his own fuller, brighter and nobler for all time to come.

But why did he linger now, even for a moment, his mind flashing back over the past and rapidly recalling those scenes and impressions associated with the unaccountable demeanor of his ward—but which unaccountable things he now understood, and was done with forever?

While Dr. Leslie stood a few minutes silently watching her, he saw that the critical moment had come when he must make the supreme decision for weal or woe, involving the destinies of two human lives, and he wanted a higher wisdom than his own to guide and direct him, however dominant rose his love—however urgently it pleaded to be heard.

The rosy flush had deepened in Ruth's cheek as her eyes met the tender appealing passion in her guardian's face—and somehow she had a sudden consciousness of having come out of a

severe conflict—of an unutterable sense of relief as of some burden lifted—some tension relaxed that had been too tautly drawn—and then of an acquiescent and unconditional surrender of her whole being to a stronger power which had compelled her by that mysterious, approximating influence, uniting two souls and making them one by their mutual love.

CHAPTER XXII.

During the next interval of silence that followed, the cathedral clock on the mantel chimed out low, sweet and triumphant, like a promise of joy, the passing hour.

For a moment longer Dr. Leslie's mesmeric eyes, irresistibly appealing, held her, evoking a torturing, passionate thrill almost akin to pain in her own soul, which had ceased its tired, strange wrestling, because it had no more force with which to wrestle; then with a low, unconscious sigh she turned to the window and looked out.

A few minutes Dr. Leslie wavered. He was striving to control the tumult of passion, thrilling through every fiber of his inmost being, and which settled in a tender, yearning love on every feature. Without speaking he crossed the room and stood beside her. One soft, white hand which was holding the curtain aside he gently took within his own and held it. The little hand fluttered an instant, then yielded to his magnetic touch, the lovely lips trembled with an almost childish quiver, but she did not turn and look at him.

"Ruth, my darling —may I not call you this? —yes, you are my darling—will you not listen to me, listen to a story, so old and yet so new, and one that I have been waiting and longing so eagerly to tell you? I shall not force the recital of my love upon you, though an inexorable something tells me that I may break the voiceless trance which some fairy charm has woven about my heart, while star-eyed Hope bids it awake and breathe and live anew. Ruth, will you

not bid me hope—oh, will you not bid me guard the fountain of my heart with ceaseless care to keep its waters pure and bright for you?"

She turned as though moved by some extraordinary power which she could not resist, her face glowing with an exquisite smile, the reflex of her loving heart, the long dark lashes half concealing the new divine shyness in her lovely eyes, her form trembling, and for a few seconds she was conscious of nothing save the soft, warm clasp in which her hand was held by the man to whom her whole heart and soul went out helplessly, willingly, and yielded up all she had to give—utterly lost in the weakness of her pure, holy love.

Dr. Leslie dropped her hand. His face softened and radiated with a glorious light, and drawing her to him, he enfolded her tenderly in his arms.

"Ruth," he said, "when first I looked into your lovely face, hope rekindled in my breast and stirred a strange emotion down in my heart so full of its clouded memories. In that moment, too, the memory of the silent, mournful past came back to me, and I thought of another face still and white, yet once so perfect in color and form and feature, with its wondrous shining hair, dreamlessly sleeping in a lonely daisy-grown grave far away in a distant State. Ruth, that early love, that fair young being whom I loved with all the first passionate warmth of my ardent boyish nature, and who professed to return my love, was cruelly won from me by my best and dearest friend—a friend whom I loved and trusted above all other friends I ever had."

He paused and looked sadly down in her beautiful face; when he spoke again, his voice seemed curiously changed.

"Do you know, can you guess at all who that friend of my boyhood was who betrayed my confidence, wrecked my bright hopes, and caused me to mistrust all human nature, and almost lose my faith in things divine? Must I tell you, darling?"

She turned to him with a quick, startled look, the flush faded out of her cheek, and she whispered: "Yes; go on, go on, and tell me all."

He drew her closer to him, and tightened his clasp, as though no earthly power should rend her from his side, then he bent and kissed her on the forehead, the first kiss he ever imprinted on her sweet, lovely face.

"Darling, I have startled and pained you, and perhaps I should not be speaking to you like this, resurrecting the charred ruins of my buried past so fraught with painful memories I would forget; but I think it is best that you, my pure, my noble Ruth, you whom I love as I never loved any other human being, and who has become all the world to me, should know at least that part of my past life, the knowledge of which, should it come to you in after years, and from other lips than mine, might cause you to censure me perhaps, for not revealing it to you now. And yet, it is unspeakably hard for me to tell you—to reveal—" he paused again.

"To reveal the name of the friend who betrayed you?" Ruth asked, with an effort finishing the sentence for him, which it seemed so hard for him to do, and looking up in his face with breathless interest.

"Yes, because that friend whom I loved and trusted as never one man loved and trusted another—that friend who came so near wrecking

my whole life for all time to come, but whom I have long ago forgiven—was none other than Frank Arnold, your father, whom you revere and love so well; and you, my beautiful, precious one, a mysterious providence has sent to me, after the lapse of all these years as the sweet atonement of that father's wrong."

Ruth gazed at him, her eyes wide open with misery and pain, and with a face suddenly grown deadly white. Then a shiver ran through her frame, she uttered a low cry as of one who had received a fatal blow, and burying her face in her hands moaned, "Oh, no, no, it cannot be! and all these months I did not know—all these months that I, Frank Arnold's child, have been under your roof and protecting care you have been so good, so gentle, so noble, so kind to me. You had it in your power to revenge my father's wrong—you—" Ruth stopped, then went on hurriedly: "But I know that my father loved and honored you, Dr. Leslie; for whenever he spoke of you it was to praise and bless you, and say over and over again that you were one of the noblest of men. I can understand now why all his life that I can remember him, he was so sad and sorrowful, so patiently enduring, and though he wronged you in his early years by his reckless course, and weak and erring as he may have been, yet God forgave him, and I believe that he found peace and comfort if not happiness during the remaining years of his life on earth. Oh, if I could have known his sad history sooner—known it before he left me for his better home—how I should have strived to have made life brighter and happier for him here. Why could I not have known till he was dead? Poor father,

how hard must have been his burden to bear, because it was one that none could share. And you, my best friend, how can I ever thank you for all that you have ever done for me? You have been to me father, brother, friend—" she stopped abruptly, pressing her burning cheeks against her palms.

Dr. Leslie raised her head, took down her hands, and clasping one in his, turned the flushed face confronting his own.

"Let the sad past forgotten be, my dear Ruth. We have no power to recall it if we would. It is irrevocable. Let me be more than all else, in all the world, to you—more than father, brother and friend included."

In that moment she knew that he was indeed everything in all the world to her, and her love for him had been the secret touchstone which filled her life with hope and delight. He was her king, and with all the loyalty of a devotee before his shrine, her heart bowed helplessly and acknowledged his power—his right to rule.

He raised her face, while a sudden shadow fell over his own.

"What is it, Ruth? Is there a conflict between love and duty? Have I been too unfair, too ungenerous, too exacting?"

"How could I think this of you?" she said sweetly, as her eyes fell.

"Oh, Ruth, don't evade me," he entreated. "Will my love atone for all? Will it make you supremely happy? Will it make you content? Ruth—darling—will you be my wife?"

He spoke with force and pathos out of the depths of a loving heart, and all the passion within him seemed to reach its climax in those

tender, pleading words. He bent his head low to hers, both voice and face eagerly questioning.

Ruth's eyes darkened rapturously. Every feature softened. She looked at him in silence, but Dr. Leslie had his answer.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The next morning, while Ruth was standing before the mirror arranging her hair, pleasantly reviewing the events of the previous day, she heard a light, quick step come bounding down the corridor, pause at the door, knock hastily, and before she could answer it, Nellie, bright and fresh as a sunbeam, burst into the room, carrying a basket of exquisite cut flowers.

"I'll bet you can't guess who sent you these, Cousin Ruth," she said, smiling and holding up the basket before her. "Look, did you ever see anything so pretty?"

"Oh, how lovely! The most beautiful flowers I ever saw. Those roses are superb. Where did they come from—and are they really for me, Nellie?" she asked, eagerly offering to take the basket. "Who sent them?"

Nellie suddenly skipped backwards, holding the basket beyond her reach.

"No, siree; you've got to guess," she laughed gayly. "You may have three guesses, and then if you miss, I'll—I'll—well I don't believe I'll give them to you at all."

"Oh, Nellie, you are such a tease. Was it Mrs. Grayson?" she said, after a moment's pause.

"No, it wasn't Mrs. Grayson," returned Nellie, mimetically, shaking her curly head. "Guess again."

"Miss Leary?"

"No, it wasn't Miss Kate, neither. Now you haven't got but one more guess, and if you miss this time you lose the flowers. Try again."

Nellie stepped back a few paces nearer the door.

"That's hardly fair, Nellie," returned Ruth, laughing, "and I can't believe you'll be so ungracious. Tell me, was it any one from the Academy? Now remember that doesn't count for a guess."

"Oh, yes it does, yes it does, and you've lost the flowers," cried Nellie triumphantly, and she laughed outright. "It wasn't any one from the Academy, or anywhere else. It was Uncle Ralph who sent them; that's who it was. See, here's his card with his name on it, and a 'Merry Christmas' to you. I can't read, but he told me what was on it when he gave me the basket to bring you."

Ruth started. A quick flush of rosy color spread over her face and neck and deepened into scarlet.

"Why, Cousin Ruth, what makes you blush so? You are perfectly beautiful. I just wish Uncle Ralph could see you now; he'd think you are prettier than these flowers. Yes, you may have 'em," she went on, "but you've got to let me put my arms around your neck and squeeze you real tight, because I love you so, Cousin Ruth," she said, handing her the basket.

"Now let me kiss you just one time for Uncle Ralph," she added; "for I know he thinks the world of you, Cousin Ruth. He can't help it. I heard him talking to mamma about you this morning. I don't know what he said, but I heard mamma say, 'oh, I am so glad!' Come, let's go down now. Breakfast is almost ready, and you are ready, too. You've finished fixing your hair and it looks ever so nice."

"Oh, you must let me change my dress first. I can't go down with my dressing gown on, you know."

"No, no; don't take off that dress, Cousin Ruth, you look so pretty in it. You know you are just beautiful all the time, but you do look perfectly lovely this morning. I heard Aunt Milly tell Cousin Joe's cook the other day that she didn't believe the angels in heaven were a bit prettier than you are, and she knew they wern't any sweeter, and she meant it, too."

Nellie stood beside the bureau, resting her elbow on the slab, supporting her dimpled chin in her little pink palms, while she gazed up at Ruth with a world of admiration in her pretty face.

"Hush, Nellie," laughed Ruth, with such a low, happy laugh. "I believe you and Aunt Milly are my most enthusiastic admirers. But it is very kind of Aunt Milly to even think such pleasant things about me, and I'm very much obliged to her, I'm sure. Now tell me, Nellie, what did Santa Claus bring you last night?" she said, changing the subject from herself.

Ruth had quite finished dressing, and stood before the mirror fastening in the bosom of her dress a cluster of sweet violets which she had taken from the basket that Nellie brought her.

She had changed the white cashmere dressing gown which Nellie thought had made her look so beautiful, for an electric blue velvet, severely plain, yet very becoming, and which simply heightened a beauty that no art could adorn. She wore no ornament except a small diamond brooch which Mrs. Grayson had given her on her last birthday, and the tiny cluster of white violets she had taken from the basket.

Why did she linger over her toilet this morning with such critical eyes? Why so fastidious about every little detail of her dress?

For one brief moment she stood and scanned herself from head to foot, then smiled, a smile entirely apart from vanity, but of perfect happiness, which was echoing and reechoing to the sweetest music in her joyous heart.

As Ruth reached the dining-room, Virgil was just leaving the room to execute some order for Mrs. Grayson, but as soon as he saw Ruth he stepped back, opened the door for her, saw her in, bowed and passed on. These little courtesies which Virgil was always so ready to show her were done with an air of perfect good breeding, and which Ruth accepted not as a matter of course, but always with a smile and a sweet "thank you."

Beside the window, looking out on the rose garden, but which at this season of the year was innocent of bloom, stood Dr. Leslie and Mrs. Grayson deep in conversation, the warm sunshine streaming in aslant the cheerful room, making a glow of picturesque radiance, and flooding the spot where they stood. She saw the glow upon her guardian's face, a glow not made by sunlight. The next moment he came forward to meet her, the light of his great love in his eyes, and a smile on his lips.

"My dear Ruth! Good-morning and a Happy Christmas!"

"Thank you," was all she could say, blushing violently despite herself, and she was almost grateful that Mrs. Grayson gave her no time to reply, for just then she approached and kissed her, and Ruth felt instinctively, even in that

moment—and she was glad, too—that Dr. Leslie had already shared his confidence with his sister.

"If you are not going anywhere particularly, dear," said Mrs. Grayson, as they sat at breakfast, "I shall be glad to have you accompany me to Calvary Chapel. There is to be a very beautiful and impressive service held there by the Sunday School of that church this afternoon, and as it is to be a love-feast, and you've never attended one, I think you will enjoy it. I have invitations for both of us, and Nellie, too."

"Certainly I will go. I remember I was very anxious to attend the Christmas service there last winter, but for some cause was disappointed. Do they have the little wax tapers on this occasion?" Ruth asked. "I should like to see that, too, and I imagine that the whole service must be exceedingly interesting and beautiful."

"So it is. Yes, after the love-feast of sweet buns and coffee, which you know are handed on trays by six ladies and six gentlemen—then comes the service of the light bearers."

"But how is the love-feast served? I mean, does the congregation sit or stand, at this particular service?"

"Oh, they are seated, my dear. I thought you knew. The coffee is served in China mugs with milk and sugar already prepared—the same as their other love-feasts—and the buns served upon the lap. While partaking of this, the choir renders some fine anthems, alternating with hymns by the congregation. Toward the close of the service, little wax candles about four inches in length are distributed to all present, then lighted and permitted to burn until the close of the service. As the congregation passes

from the church with these twinkling lights, it looks like a sort of mystic procession, and the scene is very pretty and attractive indeed."

"But what is it intended to symbolize?" Ruth asked, with the eagerness of a child. "I know you'll think I am unpardonably ignorant about this beautiful custom of the Moravians, after being here as long as I have, but it is not too late to learn, I hope."

"No. I dare say there are very many persons who have been here much longer than you have, who know no more, and even less, than you do about it. It is symbolical of the light which Christ brought into the world, and like all the religious services and customs of our Moravian brethren, who by precept and example preach the true 'unity of the brethren of Christ,' makes life great to the thought and experiences of others. Certainly there is no greater achievement and service," said Mrs. Grayson, gently.

"Ruth, won't you oblige me with a few minutes conversation in the library?" said Dr. Leslie as they left the table. "I shall not detain you long."

She paused, gave him a quick, questioning glance and asked:

"Do you wish to see me this morning?"

"Yes, now, if you can spare the time, and it will not interfere with any other arrangement."

"No, not in the least," she answered.

"Then wait for me in the library, please, and I'll join you in a few minutes."

He turned away at once and went toward his study, and Ruth went to the library, where she waited, listening, not to the sound of revelry and gay laughter which filled the merry world

outside, but for the sound of a footstep which she not only knew so well, but had learned so eagerly to listen for. The next moment she caught the sound of his step in the hall, then through the open doorway, and Dr. Leslie, smiling and looking handsomer, she thought, than she had ever seen him, came toward her.

"Come with me to the window, Ruth. I have something to show you." She rose and went over to the window, pushing aside the heavy curtain to broaden the light. He handed her a handsome mother-of-pearl jewelry case, and while she held it, he touched the spring and the lid flew back, disclosing another open, velvet-lined case containing an exquisitely chased gold ring, set with a magnificent emerald encircled with small pearls.

"Oh, how perfectly beautiful!" said Ruth, her radiant face expressive of her pleasure and admiration. "An emerald, isn't it?"

"Yes, a North Carolina emerald, or a green diamond."

"What, the Hiddenite, which is found in Alexander County and called for Mr. W. E. Hidden, of New Jersey, who identified the mineral?"

"Yes, the same. But the specimens of the native crystals were, however, in the possession of a Mr. Stevenson, of Statesville, for several years prior to this time (1881). To the energy of Mr. Hidden, however, is due its introduction as a gem of commercial value."

"Is it found in no other State?" asked Ruth, and she held the ring up to the light again so that the sun's rays would flash through it, turning it from side to side.

"No, only in North Carolina. It has been

said that every gem known to the lapidary has been found in the United States, but by far the largest variety are found in North Carolina. We have one of the richest gold producing States, too, in the Union. It is recorded that Sultan Mahmond selfishly exhausted the famous mines of Golconda to enrich his own treasury; but it will be many years before the wealth of the mines of North Carolina, the Golconda of the South, will be appreciably lessened, and then not a single individual, but the whole country will profit by their despoilment."

Ruth replaced the ring in its tiny velvet box, shut the case and handed it back to her guardian. "It is indeed very beautiful—in fact, the most beautiful ring of the kind I have ever seen, and I thank you for allowing me the privilege to see it."

"I am glad you like it," he said, and opening the box he took the ring out again.

"Ruth, I had this ring made at Tiffany's in New York purposely for you, and intended to ask you to accept it on your last birthday. This emerald was first surrounded by small opals, also native gems and very elegant. But a few days before I received the ring from New York I heard you say to Miss Leary, whether in earnest or jest I do not know, though I think it was in a jesting way, that nothing could induce you to wear a brooch or ring set with an unlucky opal or opals. Knowing that many persons are superstitious about that gem—though I have rather a weakness for them myself—I returned the ring to Tiffany's, had the opals removed, and the ring reset with these pearls, and when I received it a second time, the first

day of December had passed, so I decided to keep it and ask your acceptance of it as a Christmas gift from your guardian."

He could not avoid smiling, and he bent his head and looked into the flushed dimpling face. "What are you looking so puzzled about?" he asked, noting, as he was so quick to do, any change that came over her lovely features. "I haven't forgotten our compact, Ruth," he went on more seriously. "Remember, I bind you by no contract or promise. You are as free as the air you breathe, my dear. This little circlet is no badge of bondage, but simply a token of my esteem and love for you, and such a token as I would have asked your acceptance of before the old relationship between us had ceased to exist."

She held out both hands to him with a frank, sweet smile. "You are very good, Dr. Leslie; pray forgive me and do not think I am unappreciative. I do thank you for your beautiful gift, which I will accept and wear. But, believe me, I did not hesitate because I thought you intended this as an engagement ring—but—but—I was thinking—" whatever she intended to say was never said.

Dr. Leslie clasped the soft white hands, and with a sudden impulse bent his head and kissed them. Then he slipped the glittering circlet upon her slender finger, still retaining her hand in his. "I only hope it may prove a link in our future destiny," he said earnestly; "a link that will be as endless and beautiful as the ring itself. Did you read the inscription on the inside, Ruth?" he asked, somewhat doubtfully.

"No, I didn't know there was one," she said, and then she let him take off the ring and show

it to her. "*Semper Fidelis*," she read, with a trembling note in her sweet voice and a deepening of the clear rose-pink of her cheek.

"Did you count the pearls?"

"No, why?" Ruth looked up at him again, wondering and puzzled.

He took his pencil, and while he held her hand with the ring on it, counted slowly each little pearl. "Nineteen," he said aloud, then looked up.

"Oh, laughed Ruth comprehendingly, the puzzled expression giving place to a bewitching smile. "Indeed, I scarcely realize that I am so old."

"There is no need to try," he said lightly, and he looked at her with a laugh.

There was a light rap outside of the door, and Virgil, noisily rattling the portiere over the arched doorway, put in his head. Dr. Leslie looked up expectantly.

"I beg pardon, sir; but your horse is ready. You told me to let you know."

"All right, Virgil, I'll be out in a few minutes."

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was toward the close of January that the winter had set in with a severity almost unknown in this beautiful Southern city. The suffering was unprecedented. The relief societies were quite at their wits' end. Numbers of ladies were kept busy all over the city, dispensing the aid extended by the good and benevolent.

It was late one rainy, dreary afternoon that Mrs. Grayson returned home from one of these benevolent expeditions, complaining of a sensible chilliness and a severe headache. Dr. Leslie, watching her closely, was struck by her extreme pallor. When supper was over, and they had left the table, he said to her:

"Helen, I see that you are not well this evening, and in justice to yourself, you must give up your benevolent work for a day or two and keep perfectly quiet. You've over tired yourself."

"I hope I am not going to be ill, Ralph?"

"Oh, I hope not—but do be more careful," he said, encouragingly.

"I'm so anxious to keep up just now. No, I hope I am not going to be ill. But if I should," she hesitated—"if I should, Ralph, promise me that you'll send for Carl."

"Now don't be conjuring up fancies to worry over, Helen," said Dr. Leslie brightly. "A good night's rest and a day or two's quiet may bring you round all right again."

"But Carl?" she gently persisted.

"Yes, Helen, certainly, if you wish it he shall come home. But I hope there will be no need for his coming. When did you hear from him?"

"On Monday I had a long letter from him."

She made a motion to rise. There was a sudden shrinking and hesitation—then a spasmodic effort to get up again. A change came over her—her face turned ghastly white and she said huskily:

"I can not—I can not," reaching out her hands in a kind of protest against her own helplessness.

"You must not even try," said her brother, bending over her. "Be perfectly quiet, Helen. I'll put you on the sofa and then go for Julia."

In the hall he met Julia and Nellie on their way to Mrs. Grayson's room.

"Julia, Mrs. Grayson is not very well; she is lying down in her room. Get her ready for bed at once; I'm going to my office for some medicine, so stay with her until I return."

When he presently returned to Mrs. Grayson's room he found her in bed, the shaded lamp turned low, and Julia sitting by the bedside. Dr. Leslie bent over his sister as she lay back with closed eyes, among her pillows, and in the dim light she seemed scarcely breathing.

"Helen," he called softly, "let me give you your medicine now."

She opened her eyes and looked up at him in silence. Then she tried to raise her head, but dropped back, her weakness asserting itself. He passed his arm tenderly under her head, lifted her, and taking the glass which Julia held gave her the draught.

A few minutes later he crossed to the seat which Julia had vacated by Mrs. Grayson's bedside, sat down and leaning forward, watched the significant signs of change in her face and listened to her respiration.

The opiate had taken effect, and her breathing was lighter and less painful.

In the silence that followed, the door opened slowly and Aunt Milly came in noiselessly.

"Doctor, you go to bed when you get sleepy," she said, "and I'll sit up with Miss Helen. I've nussed her too many times not to know how to take care of her now. Suppose you let me sit up the first hours before midnight, and I can wake you at 12 o'clock, an' then you can sit up the rest of the night," Aunt Milly persisted tremulously. "I don't like to leave Miss Helen now."

"I know—but not to-night, Aunt Milly. I think it is best for me to stay by her, though I thank you for offering."

"Then I'll be in Nellie's room all night. If you need me, call me," and with a deep sobbing breath which seemed to shake her from head to foot she turned away.

Hour after hour crept slowly by, and still he sat there all through the night, keeping his lonely vigil.

In spite of his tenderness and devotion, in spite of all his medical skill and experience, he knew that he could not avert her threatened danger.

About five o'clock in the morning Mrs. Grayson awoke with a low moan and a little shiver, and Dr. Leslie saw at once that a feverish weakness had set in which seemed to exhaust all the strength she had left. She lay awake for a little while, her eyes wandering restlessly around the room, then they stopped and rested wearily on her brother.

"Helen, do you wish anything? How do you feel?" he asked quietly, anxiously watching her

face, which looked almost as white as the pillow on which she lay.

She did not answer him, but tried to give him her hand, which fell back upon the cover, but he raised it and held it in his, stroking it in a gentle, soothing way.

She closed her eyes without speaking, and soon dropped into a feverish sleep.

"How was it that she came to be so ill?" he asked himself. Her illness had rapidly taken a dangerous turn. During the long hours of the night that he had watched by her bedside, he had formed his plans resolutely, and as he always made these with careful thoughts, he carried them out promptly.

When the clock struck six, he went into the nursery and summoned Aunt Milly, and when she came he cautioned her what to do while he was absent from the room. He was going for a walk in the open air. He knew a brisk walk out in the crisp, cold air, with its wonderful purity and freshness would prove a perfect tonic to him; and so it did, for by the time he returned he felt strengthened and quite ready for the difficult fight which he knew inevitably faced him.

Nellie was sincerely miserable when she saw the sad, anxious look on her uncle's face, and it was with a very heavy heart that she prepared her lessons for the first time without her mother's assistance.

After breakfast Dr. Leslie wrote a note to Miss Rachel and dispatched Virgil with it, telling her of Mrs. Grayson's condition and asking her to come to her at once. He wrote to Ruth at the same time, but he said nothing about her

returning home. An hour later Miss Rachel arrived.

Late that afternoon, as he sat at the desk in the library, his back turned to the door, writing and apparently absorbed in his occupation, he became suddenly conscious of a faint, familiar odor of violets, and the next moment was roused by a soft touch on his shoulder and a low musical voice saying:

"Forgive me, Dr. Leslie, for troubling you —" and looking up quickly an expression of astonishment mingled with joy came into his face, and the next instant he rose smiling, with a tender exclamation of delight, and took his visitor by the hand. "Ruth, my darling! How is it that you are here so soon? Come to the fire and warm these little hands. It is bitter cold out." He wheeled a large chair before the glowing grate, and when she was seated, he looked down into the flushed face inquiringly and searchingly. He thought he detected traces of tears on her cheeks. She raised her head and their eyes met for one brief moment, but she saw in them a meaning which she had often seen before, but which now no longer baffled analysis.

Then he drew a chair near her and sat down, with a sort of gentle authority as though she belonged to him, but in a most winning and considerate way, took her hand, saying, "Allow me to take these off for you—" and began undoing her gloves as carefully and easily as she would have done it herself, and then put them on her lap.

There was not a word of tenderness spoken; he merely raised the little hand and pressed it, and touched it to his lips. She could not restrain

a smile while he busied himself removing her gloves, though her heart was very sad; but she was so susceptible to the gentle and soothing influences of those around her—and above all those of her guardian, for he seemed to lay aside so entirely all thought of self, and somehow contrived to infuse others with a strengthening and tranquilizing sense of his loving sympathy. She saw that his look and manner were tenderly grave—more so than she had ever seen them before; but he was gentleness itself, and she could not help thinking as she watched him, that his face even in its gravity was the handsomest and noblest she had ever seen.

"You see, I couldn't wait," she began, holding a hand up to shield her face from the bright heat. "I felt so anxious about Mrs. Grayson that I asked Principal Cordell to let me come. I came to help nurse Mrs. Grayson, and you really must allow me to do this for her."

"Have you ever been much in a sick room?"

She glanced up at him quickly; a sudden change came over her face and her voice faltered: "No, not a great deal; I nursed papa through his last illness. He seemed not to want any one else near him—" she paused, rose and turned away to hide the tears in her eyes. Dr. Leslie rose, too, a tender gleam in his dark gray eyes, and he strecthed out his arms longingly as if to enfold her in them, but checked himself and let them fall to his side. Ruth did not observe the yearning movement.

"I'll go to my room now, and lay my things aside," she said. "Shall I find you here when I return?"

"Yes, I will wait for you here."

When she came down-stairs he was standing at the foot of the steps talking to Miss Rachel, whose back was turned toward her. As soon as she caught the grave look on his face, and the intense depression of his manner, her heart sank with a strange dread. In an instant he tried to rally when he saw the sweet questioning eyes brilliant with tears looking down at him. Before he had time to speak, Miss Rachel glanced over her shoulder, with a look of surprise, then turned quickly round and kissed the troubled face bending toward her.

"I am glad to see you, child. I did not know you had come," she said. "You had a cold ride. It is raw outside." She stood still a moment, listening to a sound of voices which came from or beyond Mrs. Grayson's room, and without waiting to say another word she turned and walked swiftly away. For a moment after Miss Rachel had left them, Dr. Leslie stood silent, watching Ruth compassionately.

"What is it?" she said, "what is the matter?" and she held her hands out to him as though to keep herself from falling. "How is Mrs. Grayson? Do let me go to her; and don't keep anything from me, for I can stand anything better than this awful suspense."

He took the soft trembling hands and held them as tenderly as if they had been a little child's.

"Ruth, try to calm yourself, my dear. I am going to take you in to see Mrs. Grayson, but after to-day I shall exclude everyone from her sick-room except those in immediate attendance upon her."

CHAPTER XXV.

The time wore slowly on, and all through the dreary days that followed Ruth seemed to have forgotten how to reckon their coming and going.

After fever had set in Mrs. Grayson was for days unconscious to everything around her, but throughout all her delirium the one link which seemed to bind her to life and reason—the one name which she ever called was Carl—Carl.

It was as Dr. Leslie had said, "a shadow as of death brooded over the house;" and despite the fact that the doctor who regularly came and went had almost given up his patient, still Ruth refused to allow the terrible suspense and dread which hung over them to cause her to give way to despair, but with an effort of will such as she had never been called upon to exercise before, she restrained her emotions, hoped on against hope, and though it cost her a hard struggle to appear always brave and hopeful and calm in the presence of others even while her own heart was torn with unutterable anguish, yet she rose superior not only to her own sorrow and suffering, but to those around her; and the stress of circumstances, and the sweet influence of her strength and serenity—her brave endurance amidst these trials, cheered and comforted the stricken ones as nothing else did, or ever could have done. With a love that was beautiful, heroic and sublime, she gave her whole time and strength in a thousand little loving ways to lighten the burden of care and sadness of those passing through this painful conflict, otherwise its very intensity would have made it seem to

them a ceaseless eternity of torture almost unbearable.

Added to the sweet consciousness of doing her duty in sympathizing with and helping others to bear their pain, came the precious and oft repeated approbations of her guardian, which ever rang in her ear, "God bless you, Ruth, my angel of mercy—my sweet spirit of light. This is your mission, darling, to heal the wounded and broken-hearted—to teach others what the love of Christ is like."

One morning as Ruth came down-stairs rather earlier than usual she met her guardian in the hall with his hat and overcoat on, ready to go out. His face was white and sternly set, and traces of deep and strong emotion were on it, but when he spoke his voice had the same gentle ring to it, yet she thought there was a deeper melancholy, too, than she had ever heard before. Even after he had closed the door and passed out into the bright morning light, she recalled his look and tone, and somehow a keen pain seemed to strike her from her very heart's depths.

Mrs. Grayson's friends called often to make inquiries, to offer sympathy, and share the responsibility of serving if need be, but everything that skillful physicians and a thoroughly trained and disciplined nurse could do was being done to the utmost for her, so there was nothing more that could be done to soothe and soften her suffering.

When at length the crisis came and the doctors bid the family hope, the relief from dread and suspense was indeed great. Heavy hearts grew light, and grave faces bright once more—and in spite of all caution Nellie would burst into song from time to time.

A few days after the doctor had pronounced Mrs. Grayson out of danger, Ruth went into the library one morning where her guardian sat writing some letters—letters which had been waiting for answers during Mrs. Grayson's long illness. As the portiere was drawn aside, she entered without knocking. With a beaming face she crossed the room and stood beside him, her heart beating quickly, and for a minute he wrote on, heedless of her presence. She waited without speaking. Presently he laid down his pen and swung round in his chair. The happiest smile broke over his handsome face when he saw who it was, and he rose at once and placed a chair for her to sit down. He still held his hand on the back of the chair, motioning to her to be seated, while he kept his eyes fixed upon her marvellously beautiful face, every lineament lit with the reflex happiness of her soul. Ah, when the heart is full of love and gladness—when the future looks bright to us—how brightly glows all the world about us, how beautiful and radiant is life.

"No, thank you. I should not dare to now unless you will allow me to help you," she laughed, glancing at his unfinished letter; "for I see I have interrupted your correspondence."

"But sit down, please, Ruth, a few minutes; I have something I wish to tell you—something I have kept from you, little brave heart, because I thought it was best not to tell you while Mrs. Grayson was so ill."

Suddenly Ruth started and a shiver crept over her, while her face paled perceptibly, as though his words foreshaowed some new trouble, some fresh sorrow. She took the vacant seat he rolled toward her.

"I'm so sorry to have alarmed you, my dear," he said hastily, with great solicitude. "I certainly did not mean to. I should have remembered that the strain on your physical powers the past few weeks has been severely trying, and so shown more discretion. What I have to tell you, however, is something I'm sure will give you pleasure— " he hesitated.

"Please go on. Don't be afraid to tell me. I'm sure I can bear to hear a great deal of good news. Is it anything connected with Agnes?"

"Yes, and Mr. and Mrs. Glenwood and Carl?"

She looked at him eagerly. "Do you know I have wondered more than once what has kept them. Should they not have been here sometime ago?"

"Yes, two weeks ago." As he spoke he turned to the desk and picked up a yellow envelope containing a telegram and handed it to her. "Read that," he said quietly, "and I will tell you afterwards why they have been detained."

She obeyed a little nervously. While she read the brief message Dr. Leslie watched the bright color rise and glow in her cheeks. Suddenly her hands dropped in her lap.

"And to think they will be here to-morrow!" she exclaimed joyfully, looking at him with surprise. "Oh, I am so glad! Really the news seems too good to be true, and I cannot realize it. Have you told Mrs. Grayson—and Nellie? How glad they will be to know."

"No, I only received the telegram a few minutes before you came in. I shall have to prepare Mrs. Grayson for the good news without unduly exciting her. That would never do; but I said

I would tell you why Carl and the Glenwoods were delayed in reaching here sooner. I shall not detain you long. While Mrs. Grayson was so very low, and we though there was but little hope, a letter came to me one day from my friend Woodson, in New York, stating that the steamer on which Carl and the Glenwoods had sailed from Liverpool for New York had been wrecked in a terrible storm when three days out at sea, and all on board except the captain and three of the crew had perished. Woodson had waited, he said, several days before writing me to ascertain beyond a doubt if the horrible news were true—waited to gather all the details of the disaster as far as it were possible to secure them, and then a day or two later he forwarded me some New York papers with a confirmation of the reports he had written me. Ruth, I could not tell you or any one, and no one living knows or can ever know the wretchedness and anguish of soul which I suffered after the first shock of this news came, which made my heart sicken and my senses reel; and all that I suffered in the miserable days that followed. I did not make you the recipient of my confidence because I knew, under the circumstances, you could not have borne up against it. I felt that had the agony crowded in those few days lasted much longer, I should have gone down myself under it, though one can endure many a cruel blow and live and be sane. Fortunately, our city papers contained only a brief telegraphic report of the vessel and did not mention the names of any of the passengers on board. On the afternoon of the day when I received Woodson's first letter telling me of the wrecked vessel, I went in

to see Helen, and while sitting by her bedside she turned to me and suddenly and deliberately asked, 'Where is Carl?' Of course she asked the question in the fever of delirium and knew not what she was saying, but for the moment I was so completely thrown off my guard because of the strangeness of the question, that I felt a sick and deathly faintness come over me, and it was with a desperate effort I could recover my self-control. I think my look and manner must have terrified Miss Dupont, her nurse, but her admirable training bore her bravely up. I think she must have half suspected the truth, too, that some trouble had befallen Carl. A few days later there came another letter from Woodson, and if joy could kill I think I should have been its victim after I read it. Carl and the Glenwoods had engaged passage on the fated steamer and had made every preparation to come over in it, but the day on which they were to sail, some unfortunate accident had occurred which had detained them beyond the time set for the vessel's leaving, and so they were forced to postpone their return and come by the next steamer. Possibly you can faintly imagine how I felt. Even though Mrs. Grayson lay at death's door—even though the hope of her recovery had grown so dim, yet the knowledge of the safety of those dear ones whom I believed had met such a terrible fate, thrilled me with a joy so strange, so profound, that I am sure I shall not forget it to my dying day."

CHAPTER XXVI.

The next morning Ruth woke with a start. The merry sound of Nellie's voice as she romped with Bruce on the back veranda had roused her. She lay still a few moments trying to collect her dreamy, wandering thoughts and gain full consciousness. That something unxepected, if not unusual, had occurred she was quite certain.

She slipped out of bed and was soon in her dressing gown and slippers; then she went to the window and drew up the blinds.

The scene which met her view astonished her. The ground, the tops of houses, the leafless branches of the trees, everything without was covered with a glittering coating of snow, and the great white flakes were still falling and seemed to increase in size and rapidity until they had the appearance of a dense white cloud. The streets were almost deserted, and the few persons who were seen upon them hurried to and fro as if eager to be beyond the severity of the cold.

As she stood there looking out, there came a low knock at her door, and on opening it she found Julia.

"Miss Ruth, Dr. Leslie told me to give you this telegram to read." The telegram was from Carl to his uncle, dated from Washington, and stated that he and the Glenwoods were en route for home and would be in on the 11.30 train that day.

Two hours later, while Ruth was in Mrs. Grayson's room, a light quick step came bounding down the hall, and the next moment the door

opened suddenly and Nellie's curly head was thrust in.

"Oh, they're coming—Carl's coming—I saw the carriage. Do come, Cousin Ruth, and let us go out on the veranda to meet them. Come now, Cousin Ruth," she urged, and without waiting for her Nellie ran out of the room clapping her hands in a perfect glee.

Throwing a heavy shawl around her shoulders, Ruth went out on the veranda, where Miss Rachel, Nellie and Julia had preceded her, and stood shivering with excitement as well as cold, whilst the carriage drew up and stopped, and Virgil descended quickly and opened the door. There was only one vehicle, and Ruth was just wondering how so many people had managed to be stowed away in that, when Dr. Leslie alighted, then Mr. Glenwood, Mrs. Glenwood next, and finally Mrs. Glenwood's French maid, whom Nellie took for Agnes. In the midst of the joyous hubbub of welcome and greetings going on around her, Nellie was almost ready to burst out crying from disappointment as soon as she saw that Carl was not among the arrivals, and the others had no manner of interest for her at that moment—not until her uncle explained that Carl and Agnes were on the way and would arrive in a few minutes. He said that Carl had met an old friend at the station, who kindly offered him the use of his sleigh and horses, and notwithstanding the bitter cold Agnes declared that this was a temptation which she could not resist, to say nothing of the novelty of enjoying a sleigh-ride in the Sunny South—"And they are coming with all possible speed that the horses can bring them," he said, turning to Nellie with a laugh, and her face brightened immediately.

"Well, this seems like rather cold hospitality," he continued to his guests, "standing here in the snow. Suppose we go indoors and find more warmth and comfort. Rachel, if you will show George and Cousin Ella to their rooms, and they'll excuse me, I will have their trunks and boxes sent up at once. I see the dray has arrived with them." Then he turned back while Miss Rachel, with more than her ordinary cordial manner of a welcoming hostess, carried them away to their rooms—Adele, Mrs. Glenwood's maid, following with her mistress' traveling bag and extra wraps.

The beautiful and elegant rooms which had been set apart for them opened out into each other and were on the second floor. "Much more comfortable and elegant than I had imagined," was Mrs. Glenwood's mental criticism as they passed through the spacious hall and up the wide stairs, where her foot sank into the soft carpet, and then into the handsome apartments which bore the unmistakable impress of quiet elegance and refinement in all their rich appointments. These things—comfort and elegance—Mrs. Glenwood regarded as absolute requirements necessary to one's peace of mind and happiness—at least they were to her.

"Now I shall leave you," Miss Rachel said, in her direct, brusque way as soon as she had ushered her guests into their rooms. "We dine at 2 o'clock, but I shall send you up some tea right away, and should you need anything meanwhile, I shall be glad if you will let me know."

"Thank you, Cousin Rachel," assented Mrs. Glenwood, as she sank on a low lounge, resting

herself luxuriously among the silken cushions, and allowing Adele to remove her heavy fur wraps. "This is delightful, I assure you, after the heat of the cars, then the sudden change to a cold draught. We certainly owe you a thousand thanks for making everything so pleasant and comfortable for us."

"Oh, not at all," said Miss Rachel candidly; I am glad it suits you." Then she closed the door and went down-stairs, wondering a little if Mrs. Glenwood were so pleased as she had said. Ruth had told her of Mrs. Glenwood's palatial home in San Francisco, one among the most elegant and superb in that city of magnificent private homes, and that she lived and entertained in almost regal splendor; and while her brother's home was beautiful and elegant, and one among the most sumptuous in his own city, "but of course was not to be compared to their cousin's in the far West," Miss Rachel said conclusively to herself.

Ruth and Nellie had ventured back to the veranda with Dr. Leslie, for they had heard the merry sound of sleigh bells, and the next moment they saw the light vehicle drawn by a pair of superb bays with two persons sitting in the front snugly ensconced and almost invisible in fur robes, come dashing up the driveway, if not according to the driver's idea of safety—who was sitting on the seat behind—apparently to the entire satisfaction of the two occupants of the front seat. Carl threw the reins to the groom and sprang out, and then assisted a slight, graceful girl to the flag-stone. Dr. Leslie received Carl with open arms, while Nellie, between tears and laughter, threw her arms around his neck

and clung to him as if she never meant to let him go.

"Well, Uncle Ralph, it's worth going away if for no other reason than the pleasure of returning to recieve such a welcome as this," Carl said as soon as he could free himself from Nellie's warm embrace, and find his voice. "It's something like the prodigal's return, sure enough."

"Now see here, Cousin Ralph, I don't propose to be ignored any longer," said Agnes, pouting deliciously, and coming forward with her accustomed grace of manner. "I don't believe in extending all the welcome to the prodigal." She held out her little hand with a smile to her Cousin Ralph, and with all the warmth of a brother he bent and kissed her, while tears of genuine joy stood in his kind eyes. "This is indeed a great pleasure, Agnes, and I cordially welcome you and Carl both home."

"A thousand thanks, Cousin Ralph. So good of you—" but she got no further—an exclamation of surprise escaped her, for just then Ruth stepped from behind one of the pillars which had partially concealed her, and then came toward them with that lovely movement of welcome which was so fascinating in her. "Well, here you are at last," cried Agnes, her face glowing with happiness as she caught Ruth in her arms and kissed her repeatedly; then throwing back her head and holding her a little way off, she went on in a rapture of admiration: "I do believe you are lovelier than ever, darling; oh, you radiant creature! How I have so longed to see you. Can it be true that I am acturally with you, or am I dreaming? But pardon me, and allow me to introduce you to my cousin and

your foster brother, Carl Grayson—Mr. Grayson, I suppose I should say. I am sure you must feel as if you two already knew one another—you have heard of each other so often—I generally do when I hear people talked of so much—I mean those whom I have never seen."

Carl's eyes had been fixed steadily on Ruth's face while Agnes held her, and was raving over her in such a burst of enthusiastic admiration, and when she turned to acknowledge the introduction, she gracefully held out her hand and gave him the loveliest smile of welcome. Carl's gay handsome face kindled into smiles and he felt drawn to her at once, and Ruth in turn was quite won by his gentle, chivalrous bearing, and she found he was pretty much the knightly person her fancy had depicted. If anything, he was even handsomer than the portrait of himself which hung in his mother's room, and his uncle had remarked on meeting him that he had grown stouter and more manly.

"Mother has written me so often about you, Miss Arnold, that now I've met you it seems quite as if I have been knowing you always," he was saying to her as he walked beside her, with Nellie clinging to his hand, while Dr. Leslie and Agnes led the way in; and very soon he and Ruth were talking to one another as frankly as though they had known one another for years.

"And so this is the Sunny South, Cousin Ralph, of which Ruth has been writing me such glowing accounts," said Agnes, glancing over her shoulder at Ruth with a quick flash of her mischievous eyes. "But I dare say this particular snow storm was imported from the North Arctic, or some unexplored region, in honor of our visit, eh, Carl?"

"It seems more likely that we brought it with us from the North," he laughed, "for it was snowing like fury when we left New York yesterday."

"Oh, you are judging our Southland too hastily," interposed Ruth, "and I'm sure you will change your opinion before a great while."

"Yes, for you may probably find next week as warm, bright and smiling as if there never had been any such things as snowstorms or even cold weather," said Carl warmly.

"Oh, I like this weather—don't apologize for it, I pray you. It is perfectly delicious to me," laughed Agnes. "It is a wonder you don't tell me, Carl, that the very next sunshine will tempt the crocuses and dandelions out of their winter sleep till all the lawns are looking as beautiful and springlike as country fields."

"In spite of your incredulity, I do make the statement now, and I shouldn't be surprised if you see it verified in less than a week."

They had entered the hall, and as Carl took off his overcoat and hat and hung them on the rack he said, "Well, Uncle Ralph, this does seem homelike, and it is delightful to be with you all once again."

"And it is equally pleasant to have you home again, my boy," his uncle said heartily, responding to his compliment.

"Dr. Leslie, if you think Agnes can be spared, I will take her to her room, and when she is rested we will come down to the sitting-room," said Ruth, laying her hands on Agnes' arm. Julia had already preceded them with Agnes' traveling bag and wraps, and as the girls ran lightly up the steps together, Agnes began again in her bright, eager way:

"What have you been doing with yourself all this long time, darling? I have so much to tell you I hardly know where to begin, and I know I shall never end. It has been such a ceaseless whirl of parties and receptions and amusements of every kind since we parted, that I am heartily sick of it all. I positively envy you your restful time here."

Ruth smiled and pressed her hand, and as they had reached her room she opened the door and led Agnes in, and for the next two hours the girls were left uninterruptedly alone to renew their sweet girl friendship—a friendship easily made and oftentimes too easily broken.

Nellie had followed them a few steps, but seeing that they were so much engrossed in their own talk and paid so little heed to her, she turned back and joined her uncle and Carl in the hall.

"When may I see mother, Uncle Ralph?" Carl asked eagerly, as soon as the two girls had left them; "I am sure she is waiting for me, and I am so anxious to go to her." Even as he spoke he glanced anxiously in the direction of his mother's room.

"You dear boy," said Dr. Leslie warmly. "I am glad to know that with all you have seen and learned during your eighteen months' sojourn abroad, you have not forgotten your mother—that you think as much of her as ever. While your absence has been a sore trial to her, yet she has borne up bravely, and I am sure can never regret the sacrifice which she has made, when she sees how manly and improved you are"—a look of pride and happiness came into his uncle's face. "Well, here we are at your

mother's door, and here I will leave you. Come, Nellie, we'll go to the sitting-room and have a quiet time to ourselves until the others come to join us."

Nellie still held her brother by the hand. "But I must kiss Carl, first," she said resolutely. "You know I love you, Carl, with my whole heart, and oh, I am so glad you've come home again."

"You are a dear little sister, Nellie," he said, "and certainly this is one of the brightest and happiest days of my life." Then he stooped and kissed the little beaming face upturned to his with such a sweet glad smile.

"Good-bye, till I see you in the sitting-room," he continued in a broken voice and tears of joy in his eyes, and Nellie waved a kiss to him as she skipped down the hall beside her uncle. Carl knocked gently on his mother's door, and hardly waiting for the familiar "come in" which he remembered still, he entered and closed the door behind him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"And were there no other children? I mean living ones?" The question was asked with eager, almost breathless interest.

"Oh, yes, a little girl by his first marriage; but as the mother died a day or two after her birth, and there was no one to take charge of her, a wealthy relative in New York agreed to take the infant—though she was very delicate—rear and educate her as his own daughter and finally adopt her, provided her father would renounce all claims to her in the future."

"And did he accede to such an arrangement?" The question was asked in a tone of surprised amazement.

"Yes, and I suppose with an easy conscience, feeling that it would be for the best; but it seems that as soon as the child was taken to New York it sickened and died—at least it was so reported—and—"

Ruth had unavoidably heard this much of what she inferred, from the earnest tone and serious manner of Mrs. Glenwood and Miss Rachel—for it was they who were the speakers—to be a private conversation not intended for her ears, so she came out at once from behind the deep curtained recess in the sitting-room.

It was in the afternoon of the day of the visitors' arrival, and, notwithstanding the gray snow clouds and the bitter cold without, there was a general sense of brightness and cheerfulness throughout the whole house within.

Carl had remained with his mother until dinner was announced, and immediately that meal

was over he took himself off to see Aunt Milly, his old nurse, greatly rejoicing her heart, while she declared over and over to him that she never expected to set eyes on him again in this world.

It was not very long before Carl came in and Agnes made room for him on the divan beside her, and when Ruth appeared Agnes insisted that she too should occupy the seat with them. Ruth settled the question, however, by drawing up a chair within conversational distance, and after exchanging a few merry words with Agnes, rather withdrew herself and let her monopolize the conversation.

From time to time as Ruth's eyes rested upon Carl's handsome, laughing face, and watched his easy, graceful manners and pleasant little ways with Agnes, she did not wonder that any one could help liking him. There was, besides a striking resemblance to his Cousin Agnes in features, an equally marked similarity in their natures—the same vivacity, the same perfect freedom from all affectation. True, he had all his uncle's chiselling of features, with some of his intellectual breadth of brow and gentleness of mouth; but withal he looked a much nearer kinsman to his beautiful cousin with her gracefully acquired society ways, and Old World graces, than his handsome uncle whom Carl still regarded with as much admiration and almost adoration as in the days of his boyhood.

Agnes looked up at him with a radiant glance as he took the proffered seat beside her.

"I was just thinking about you, and wondering what had deprived us of your charming society so long. Not that I haven't been most delightfully entertained," she said quickly, "but

I am going to ask Ruth to favor us with some music, and I so much want that you should hear her play and sing. I asked Cousin Helen when I was in to see her, if music would disturb her, and she assured me to the contrary. She says that it always has the most soothing and calming influence upon her even when she is sick, and she would be glad to hear Ruth's sweet strains echoing through the old house again—or something to that effect, Now you see, darling, you are expected to respond promptly and gracefully to my request, as well as Cousin Helen's expressed wish. Carl, I depute you to open the piano and escort this fair musician to her seat."

He instantly rose, went to the piano and opened it, and then came back for Ruth, bowing low before her.

"Miss Arnold, it will give me great—"

"Miss Arnold indeed," Agnes laughed gayly, "when are you two going to get acquainted? Do be sensible and call one another by your Christian names."

Ruth's candid eyes met Carl's frankly. His own, with something in their inscrutable expression just then reminding her so much of his uncle's, beamed with good humor, and involuntarily they both laughed as their eyes met. Still studying her face, he said:

"Shall we do as Agnes suggests?"

"I suppose I may allow you to take advantage of our relationship and call me Ruth," she said, smiling and flushing.

"Thank you," he said, pretending not to see her suddenly changed color, and Ruth and Agnes both rose and all three moved to the piano.

The hours of that day sped rapidly and happily by, and at its close, when the household were gathered around the family altar, it was with a heart overflowing with gratitude that Dr. Leslie had offered up praise and thanksgiving to the Almighty for the safe arrival of the travelers, the promised recovery of his sister, commended them all to the Father's favor, and then consecrated himself anew to His service. His earnest and simple devotion affected more than one of his listeners to tears. As soon as the prayer was finisned, Agnes and Ruth bade the family good-night and retired immediately to their room.

"Oh, I have so longed for this hour ever since I came," said Agnes, as she sank down on a comfortable couch before the glowing grate, and taking Ruth's hand gently drew her down beside her. "I am so glad, too, to have you all to myself again, darling, for I have a thousand things to talk to you about. But wait a moment." She rose suddenly and turned down the light, and the rosy glow made by the burning coal fire in the grate made a light most suited to their feelings. Then she came back, sat down, and fixing her eyes steadily on Ruth's expectant face, said very deliberately:

"Well, in the first place, I'm going to tell you frankly that I don't intend to occupy that pretty room next door which is done up in such exquisite luxury and taste, and which has been assigned to my especial use, but I'm going to share your room with you. What have you to say for or against it?"

Ruth gave her a sweet reassuring smile. "Why certainly. I shall be too glad to have

you with me, and even after I go back to the Academy, I want you still to occupy my room. Before you came, I thought probably you might wish a room all to yourself, and in the event you didn't, I knew it would be very easy to make a change. Yes, I assure you that I'm really very glad you do not like the other arrangement, and so will stay with me."

Ruth was standing dressed by her bedside when Agnes awoke next morning. Agnes rubbed her eyes and stared curiously at her for a moment, half unconscious, half asleep.

"Who is that? Where am I?" she asked.

Ruth laughed. "Get up and come to the window and see what lovely sights you are missing. Nature has transformed the world into a veritable Crystal Palace since we closed our eyes upon it last night, and I was so afraid the sun would play havoc with it before you saw it."

"Oh, you darling," said Agnes, throwing her arms around her neck. "Nothing in this world is half so lovely as you are. But let me see this beautiful world of transient wonders." Ruth handed her her dressing gown and slippers, and hastily slipping them on, the girls were soon standing arm in arm beside the window.

"Oh, darling, it is lovely—beautiful—grand," said Agnes enthusiastically. "I can't find the words I want to express myself."

The scene which nearly deprived them of the power of vision was indescribably brilliant and beautiful. During the night a cold fine rain had fallen and immediately frozen into ice of the purest crystal. Everything was sheathed in a heavy coating of this transparent incrustation, and under the dazzling rays of the morning sun

radiated and glistened like burnished silver. The limbs of the largest trees were bent almost to the ground under their heavy burden, forming graceful arches, and glistened as if wreathed in diamond sprays. Nothing could equal the glory and splendor of the landscape. Myriads of icicles hung from the eaves of the house and pendant boughs, amongst which the sunbeams danced with an irridescent light, changing them into an infinite variety of beauty and splendor.

"Well, it is a pretty picture," Agnes said, turning away from the window at last. "But then one can't even look at a beautiful thing forever. The bright light has made me as blind as the proverbial bat." She clapped her hands over her eyes, until the momentary blindness had passed, and then she began to arrange her wealth of shimmering hair. When she and Ruth descended to the breakfast-room, a little later, the church bells were ringing out their pleasant call over the dazzling morning scene. They hurried through the meal so as to be ready in time for the opening service, and on their way out to the carriage found Carl leaning against one of the pillars of the veranda quietly smoking, and as oblivous of the cold as if it were the mildest day in May. Agnes walked up to him, dimpling with smiles, and slipped one of her hands through his arm, holding her prayer book in the other.

"Oh, for shame, Carl Grayson! Where have you been all the morning? Is this the conduct of a host—the manner in which he should dispense good-will and hospitality to his guests? I had hoped to find a different reception from you. Aren't you going with us to church this morn-

ing? My conscience will mercilessly lash me if I betake myself off to worship and leave you here to your own wayward devices."

Before he answered her he tossed his cigar away and raised his hat to Ruth. Mrs. Glenwood he had met at breakfast.

"Not if you will excuse me, pretty cousin. I'll see you safely off on your perilous journey and then I'm going to spend the hour of your absence with mother. You can do penance for both of us. Allow me to take you and Ruth to the carriage; I see Uncle Ralph and Cousin Ella are waiting, and there goes your last church bell. Look out! be careful. A thin coating of ice has formed over the floor since it was cleared off this morning, and you might go down unawares." He gave a swift glance at her and went on: "You look splendidly, little coz—quite as well as I ever saw you."

"Do you think so? Thanks. I love frankness above all things," she laughed, "and I certainly don't think any one will ever have cause to reproach you for a lack of that virtue."

"Yes, I am frank—or matter-of-fact—which? But unfortunately the *fin de siecle* public don't, as a rule, appreciate the most matter-of-fact people, it matters not how much solid excellence they possess. I am glad, however, that you do."

"Well, I've nothing more to say," she laughed, as he handed her and Ruth to their seats, and then Virgil closed the door.

"A safe and pleasant journey." Carl smiled and raised his hat, and after the carriage drove off stood listening for a moment to the grating sound which the wheels made on the crisp, hard

snow as it yielded to the pressure of the vehicle, and listening to tinkling sleigh-bells sounding far into the distance, he whistled softly to himself, turned and went into the house and directly to his mother's room.

The following Tuesday Ruth returned to the Academy.

Mr. and Mrs. Glenwood were to spend only a month with their relatives and then return to their home in California, but Dr. Leslie and Mrs. Grayson had prevailed upon them to let Agnes remain on a visit to them, and the invitation so cordially extended had been accepted for a perfectly indefinite time.

Ruth had promised Agnes when she left to return and spend the Easter holidays with her, at the same time assuring her that it would be the last holiday she intended to take until she was graduated in May.

Now that Carl had returned home, Mrs. Grayson daily grew stronger and better, and began to recover rapidly. Dr. Leslie laughingly told her that Carl's presence was better medicine for her than all the doctor's physic, good nursing and the tender and loving sympathy of her friends combined.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Oh, I'm so glad you've come—so glad to have you back again, darling," cried Agnes, in a gay voice of welcome, laughing and running down the steps to meet Ruth as she came up the walk, and so silently that she was quite to the house before Agnes saw her. Then throwing back Ruth's Oxford gown, she slipped her arm in hers, and they sauntered along to the house, Agnes rambling on in her bright eager fashion.

"Everybody has gone driving except Cousin Helen and myself, and I stayed to receive you. Now that was kind of me, wasn't it? Carl and Nellie are going by the Academy for you, and will be dreadfully disappointed that they've missed you. But I'm glad you didn't wait. We'll have time to have a little talk before we go out this evening."

"Go out this evening?" echoed Ruth, in a surprised tone. "Where?"

"Oh, yes, I'd forgotten you didn't receive my note I sent by Nellie this afternoon. Mrs. Brice has asked us to a musicale this evening. Well, not a musicale exactly, but the Misses Vandoren are to be there, and some other friends, and there's to be music—just a quiet affair, and I knew you wouldn't mind going."

"And you accepted for me?"

"Of course I did, you little nun," said Agnes, laughing. "And now don't look so alarmed as if I'd done something dreadful. You are not expected to play or sing a single piece."

"But Agnes, you know I've not been to a so-

cial gathering of any kind since papa's death, and I do not feel that I care to go."

The color rose in Ruth's face and her voice trembled, for the old wound was still tender. Agnes knew that she should win Ruth over to her side, for with all her gay, careless ways she was irresistible when she cared to be, and this was a time when she cared.

"I know, darling," she said, "but this is to be just a quiet gathering of a few friends, all of whom you know, and I can't see any possible reason why you shouldn't go. Indeed, I think it will be almost ungracious to refuse, and then after you've once relaxed your rule of making a recluse of yourself, it will not be half so hard afterwards. You beautiful darling, you know you can't always bury yourself from the admiring gaze of the world."

"Hush, Agnes. You're talking nonsense now, and I'll not listen to you," said Ruth.

"Indeed, I'm not. I never uttered a sounder truth. But come in; Cousin Helen is waiting in the sitting-room to see you, and afterwards you can go up to your room and take off your toggery. By the way, your cap and gown are wonderfully becoming to you—or rather you are becoming to your cap and gown—I know I should look a perfect fright in them."

They went up the steps arm in arm and passed through the open window into the sitting-room. Mrs. Grayson was laying down on a low couch, and Bruce was stretched out on the rug near her, as if keeping guard; and as soon as the dog saw Ruth, he expressed his delight by a pleased grin and began pounding the floor with his tail. Ruth stooped and patted him on the head as she passed him to speak to Mrs. Grayson.

A stream of light was flowing through the room, and a soft wind blew a sweet rush of scent from the white-blossomed cherry trees in the garden and drove the delicate white flakes drifting through the golden air.

Mrs. Grayson looked up with a bright gladness on her gentle face when the girls entered, and then sat up to greet them. Her welcome, as it always was to Ruth, was tender kindness itself, and while she talked to her, Agnes stood by with her hand resting on Ruth's shoulder, watching the varying expression of Mrs. Grayson's face, knowing how tenderly she must love her.

"How much better Mrs. Grayson is," said Ruth, as the girls were on their way up-stairs. "I had not expected to see her so much improved."

"Yes, she looks better," Agnes said; "but she doesn't gain strength very fast. Cousin Ralph says she is to go away somewhere for a change, in a week or two, if she doesn't get stronger—" she stopped suddenly.

"There's the carriage now, and mamma and papa and Cousin Ralph have come back. I don't suppose Carl and Nell have come. They've gone by the Academy for you. But if you don't hurry, darling, we'll hardly have time to dress for tea. It was quite ready when you came. Let me help you carry your bundles, so you can manage your long black tog better."

"Of course not," Ruth demurred laughingly, but the next moment Agnes had pulled them out of her reluctant arms, held them with a firm grasp, and with a triumphant look went on talking as unconcernedly as possible.

Ruth came down-stairs early the next morn-

ing before breakfast, and went into the library, which was still uninvaded, to answer a letter that she had received the day before. She raised the window and flung open the blinds to let in the light and allow the fresh, sweet air to fill the room.

A morning sight of dewy flowers, white and gold and violet, on a sparkling lawn, and singing birds flitting here and there, was spread out before her, while some far-away bells were ringing their slow chimes, the sound peculiarly intensified in the clear, moist atmosphere. A scent of roses flowering on the trellis floated in, while out there on the lawn in sheltered nooks the sunlight had scarcely touched the gloom—but all was bright and sweet and beautiful, a glowing melody without, answering to the happy melody within her own heart—a strange sweet happiness and bewildering hope which she could not realize.

"I am wondering why you are up so early," said a voice close beside her, which made her turn suddenly to meet the adoring glance of her guardian.

"You came in so quietly I never heard you," she said, smiling and flushing. "I came down to answer Mrs. Hawkins' letter which I received yesterday. I was afraid I should disturb Agnes if I wrote in the room while she was sleeping. But when I opened the window to let in the air and light, I could not resist the temptation to linger here just a little while and enjoy the delicious freshness and beauty of the morning scene. Isn't it lovely?" While she was talking she had put the letter in his hands.

He glanced at the superscription, which was

not familiar to him, then looked up into her face with a half-furtive scrutiny as if to observe the effect of his words, and handed the letter back to her.

"In that case," he said, not answering her question, "I'm afraid I am intruding then, and would better leave you so as to give you an opportunity to answer your letter." He turned reluctantly as if he would go away, though he felt that he could not part from her now.

The color deepened in her fair, sweet face, a faint smile crept to her lips, and she shook her head.

"Oh, I can answer it some other time—this afternoon, perhaps, which will do just as well. I should like to see Mrs. Grayson, anyway, before I finished writing it, as Mrs. Hawkins not only writes to know how she is, but wishes to know if she will meet her at Morehead this summer, where she and Mr. Hawkins expect to spend several weeks. I suppose she writes this early so as to give Mrs. Grayson time to consider her proposition before she makes arrangements to go elsewhere to spend the summer. Perhaps you can tell me?" then smiling—"Indeed you are not disturbing me."

He turned back. "Then I will stay, since you do not forbid it, for I came here purposely to see and to talk with you. I have seen so little of you since our good friends came, even when you are at home—and your school duties, too, have made such a drain upon your time, and I fear to the utter disregard of your health." He looked at her keenly and tenderly for a moment.

He seemed to come to a sudden resolve about

what he had to say, and went on, smiling; "Yes, I intend to order the last one of you off to the seashore in June, so you may write and say as much to Mrs. Hawkins. I believe you need the change quite as much as Helen does. I shall not compromise or even argue the question with her as I did last summer, as to whether or not she go or remain I see it is best for you both to have the change, so opposition to my plans will amount to nothing." There was a flash of merriment in his handsome eyes.

"I did not speak of this before, because I had not quite decided upon the exact location for the season, but Mrs. Hawkins' letter has turned the scale in favor of Morehead, and makes it sure that you go there. Besides the physical benefit which you will be sure to derive from the trip, and this can not be overestimated, there is the charming social and intellectual enjoyment in meeting with many of the most brilliant intellects of both sexes in the State; and you will have an opportunity to attend the meetings of the Teachers' Assembly, that great body of educators which is one of the largest in the United States, and which hold their annual meetings in their own handsome builiding down by the sea. The ability and influence of this vast educational organization is so comprehensive in its scope, and so deeply impressed upon current affairs, that these meetings have become an event of much more than ordinary or mere local importance. Then there are other attractions to be found at Morehead—the fishing and sailing, the pure salt air, surf-bathing and the many places of historical interest near by to visit. Yes, I've quite decided upon Morehead as the place infi-

nitely preferable to any other for this summer's outing. I shall take care to write to the proprietor of the Atlantic Hotel in good time to have him reserve several of his most desirable rooms in advance for me, and I'm sure you'll find there every possible accommodation and comfort. Agnes, of course, will accompany you and Mrs. Grayson, and I believe she will enjoy the recreations and amusements provided. Now tell me what do you think of my arrangement? Will it be pleasant—is it agreeable to you?" he asked in a kind tone.

"Perfectly so, to me, and I think I may speak affirmatively for Agnes, too. I believe she will be delighted."

He meditated for a little, then said: "Now there is something else I wish to talk to you about—something I came here specially to say to you." He hesitated again, and seemed to be bracing himself for some unpleasant ordeal, while Ruth's quick sympathy with him made her turn and look at him with an anxious searching glance.

The sudden serious gravity of his face caused her own to grow slightly paler than before, though his voice was peculiarly kind and gentle. He took her hand in his and held it, unconsciously crushing it in his strong clasp. Her heart began to throb with a quick sense of pain, and she turned her troubled face again to the window and gazed out on the wide-stretching lawn, but scarcely seeing the sunny landscape which a moment before had never seemed to glow more brightly, more beautifully.

"Ruth, look at me and listen to what I have to say," he pleaded, gently turning her face to

him, "and don't look so grieved. What I am going to say to you need not give you a moment's pain. There, let me see the old sweet smile playing again about your lips—that inimitable smile of yours, which will yet, in spite of yourself, pardon what I am about to say—make willing slaves of men. I was beginning to reproach myself that I had driven it away from your sweet face." Then, after a little pause, he went on: "Ruth, you remember the compact made between us several months ago?" The question seemed to take her aback for a moment, but she looked up, her eyes wide open with wonder, and she said quickly:

"Yes, certainly I remember. I could not forget it so soon."

"Well, for certain reasons, some things I said to you on that occasion, I wish to repeat again, because the time has come, or will come very soon, when you must leave the quiet and sheltered seclusion of a student's life which you have led so long, and take your place in the world—that social world which will claim you, and in which your brilliant genius, your transcendent beauty, and attractive qualities of mind and heart, will easily make you a bright and shining leader. Ruth, you will be, as you know, the acknowledged queen in the charmed circle in which you will move, and you will justly win, too, the distinction accorded to you. Your company will be eagerly sought by the distinguished, the worthy, and the brave, who will come to you, perhaps full of honors, bow themselves and lay their all at your feet. Do you know, there seems to be a sort of penalty for being surpassingly beautiful, and it has often been asserted

that very few women who have become famous by their beauty have lived to a mature age of reasonable content and happiness. However this may be, I think we need beauty just as truly as we need truth, for it is as much a part of our lives, and as much a quality of divinity as righteousness." He remained silent a moment, and gave her another keen glance before he said: "Ruth, remember I do not bind you by promise or outward token to be my wife. But God grant, darling, that you may not make the fatal mistake of marrying a man you do not love, or your loving heart will soon be broken and you will wilt away like a tender flower plucked by rude hands."

Another moment he bent his head, and made a motion to turn away. Something so like a moan escaped him and shook his strong frame that it wrung her heart.

Raising her hand she laid it lightly, and it seemed unconsciously, upon his arm. This first shy caress of hers, the first which she had ever given him, was one of the deepest love and sympathy, and he so understood it.

CHAPTER XXIX.

One bright morning Carl, Ruth and Agnes, with Virgil as coachman, made a tour about the town, with the special view of visiting the Museum, which was always an object of interest to strangers.

The carriage stopped before a plain, brick building, with a tiled roof—a building whose antiquity and association made it specially interesting to visitors.

They dismounted and went in and found many things of great interest and value—things which represented the life and times of the first colonists of the old Moravian town; and there were other relics of equal interest and value from foreign shores, donated by foreign missionaries. Here were large show-cases filled with minerals of the country, petrifications and precious stones; and many from all over the world, were arranged along the walls. Here, cases of shells of every known variety; large collections of butterflies; reptiles in alcohol; stuffed birds; anaconda; alligator and crocodile; sea turtle; musk-deer. Here varieties of woods; varieties of birds' eggs, including ostrich; specimens of coral; sea-weed; Indian relics; military weapons of Revolutionary and Confederate times were found also. Then there were a large number of old books—among them a German Bible, leather back and brass bound, printed in 1569. A cream-colored glazed tile stove, decorated with leaves, six feet high, with claw legs, stood on one side of the principal room—there were two apartments in the building. The first piano brought to the Mora-

vian town occupied a prominent position; once belonging to the old Moravian tavern, and used during General Washington's visit, for his entertainment. Here was an odd old instrument for taking profiles, before the days of Daguerre; a wooden foot stove, with heater, used in traveling; a small loom for weaving tape for domestic use by the ladies; reels of different kinds; flax wheels where was spun the beautiful linen kept as heirlooms in the Moravian families; German traveling baskets, used by the first settlers; old clock from the Sisters' House; leather buckets of the first fire engine; stamps for printing calico; bottles and pitchers of china and glassware; ship trunks; first street lamp used in the Moravian town in 1789; a parchment covered Bible; high-backed chairs, similar to the one donated by the Brethren to the North Carolina room at Mt. Vernon; and many other things were in the general collection. Here was an Esquimo case; a Chinese corner, with idol, lacquered ware, tea chests and all kinds of their work; a large collection of valuable coins from all countries, and a beautiful exhibit of Colonial and Continental State and United States currency. One of these was curious:

"Two Pence.

"We, or either of us, promise to pay Two Pence on demand.

"Oct. 22, 1803.

"Conrad Kaiser."

This was a check for change in a store. One collection was of special interest—the traveling outfit of the Moravians who came from Pennsylvania and settled in Bethabara, consisting of

a small iron pot, pewter plates and cups, tea-pot, coffee-pot, gallon, quart, pint and gill measures, lard-oil lamp, all made of the same metal, and occupied one corner alone.

Above were arranged specimens of the early pottery—the large dish which was the old pottery sign, decorated in colors, brown, green and yellow—1773 being most prominent. Here, too, were specimens of tableware, ornaments for mantels, moulds for pewter plates, as everything practical and ornamental was made at the pottery that could be made in clay. Around the room were framed certificates of the skill of their early workmen brought from Europe, as, according to the old custom, no man was allowed to ply his trade without such a certificate. Oil paintings, donated by citizens, brought over with their household treasures; some of them said to have been done by some of the old masters—at any rate they were very fine.

Here was a steel print of Count Zinzendorf and his wife Erdmuth Dorathea; steel engravings of Amos Comenius, done before his death in 1670; Christian David, and others, whose names have been mentioned in a sketch of the Moravians; noted Bishops and Brethren, amongst them Peter Boehler, the devoted Moravian in whose company John Wesley, founder of the Methodists, crossed the ocean during his voyage to America, and to whom he declared he owed his conversion. The high pulpit, with sounding-board above, brass candlesticks and chandeliers used in the Moravian Church when first built in 1800, were preserved here intact; and many things too numerous to mention.

When they had taken their seats in the car-

riage and were driving up Main Street, through the almost silent city—for the roar and bustle of Winston scarcely reached the old Moravian town—Carl turned to Agnes and asked,

"Well, have you been repaid for your time and trouble? Are you much disappointed in the Museum?"

"Not in the least. I have been most delightfully entertained looking at those old relics. I had no dream you had such things here—and dear me, just to think what a place for relic hunters. I think they must nearly go wild to get hold of many of those things there. Do many people know about them, outside of the city?"

"A portion of those things was taken to the State Exposition at Raleigh, in 1884," said Ruth, "with the exhibit of fancy work and art from the Academy during the eighty years of its establishment, at that time, together with the county exhibit carefully collected, and this county gained the one hundred dollar premium offered for the finest county exhibit in North Carolina. I have visited the Museum several times; and I always find something interesting each time—something I had not seen before."

"I'd like to have those eggs and butterflies," said Nellie, "and some of those stuffed birds; but those snakes—ugh! I don't want to see them any more. I'm afraid I'll dream about them to-night."

"Where to now, please, Mr. Carl?" Virgil asked, glancing sidewise over his shoulder, and keeping an eye on the gamesome horses. He slackened their pace just a little.

Carl took out his watch. "Where do you and Ruth wish to go now?" he asked, looking at Agnes, then at Ruth.

"Wherever Agnes proposes," said Ruth. "I'm out for her special pleasure to-day, so have no preference, or any suggestions to make or offer."

"Will we have time to visit one of the factories—one of those large plug factories—before noon?"

"Yes, ample time."

"Then let us go to one of these first, and afterwards we can go to one of the warehouses where the tobacco is sold. I have the greatest curiosity to see both."

"Virgil, drive to Mr. Raynor's factory. R. J." Then he turned to Agnes again. "Our tobacco factories are no doll houses, I assure you. The one we are going to now is one of the largest plug factories south of Baltimore, and does an extensive business. The sales, I am told, extend all over the South, and as far north as Pennsylvania, and west as far as St. Louis. The building, too, you will see when we get there, is a splendid structure, has all the modern improvements, and is built almost entirely fireproof."

"I should like to know, as a matter of abstract curiosity, you know," Agnes said, but with evidently genuine interest, "how many workmen these factories employ, and if they are all colored—I mean the majorityof them."

"They generally employ from two to eight hundred hands each—the greater number being negroes, who prefer to work in crowds," said Carl, in an instructive tone. "Now is there anything else you wish to know? I'll do my Level Best" (emphasizing Level Best) "to give you any information you may desire. I am glad to see you so interested in some of our great enterprises, and—"

"No, no, that will do," she interrupted, with a characteristic wave of her hand. "What's the use? We'll soon be there now, and I can see for myself."

"We must try to gain a little time and get a bird's-eye-view of the city from the observatory," said Ruth. "I think we may do this if we'll not spend too much time inspecting the different departments." She looked at Carl for a suggestion.

"I don't know," he answered reflectively, "but I dare say we'll take the time anyway."

"Of course we will," said Agnes, decisively. "We must see all there's to be seen, good, bad and indifferent."

"That settles it," laughed Carl; "you know when a 'woman will,' and so on—but here we are."

A brisk drive had soon brought them to their destination, and when the carriage halted and Carl helped them out, he stopped to tell Virgil to call for them at the expiration of an hour, and then led the way into the factory. They entered a large, square hall-way, on the left of which was the office and private receiving-room of the proprietor, where Carl went at once to ascertain if they could be admitted into the various departments and shown over the building.

In a few minutes he returned, accompanied by a tall, fair-haired man, about thirty-five, with a blonde moustache, and whom Carl introduced as Mr. Kyle. In the absence of the proprietor, Mr. Kyle had courteously offered to show them through the factory.

"I don't suppose we'll have time to see everything," said Agnes, "but merely get a glimpse."

"Hardly more than that on so short a visit," returned Mr. Kyle. "But you can form some general idea how the work is carried on."

Then he opened a large double door, behind which the sound of singing and the monotonous thumps of blows from the workmen's mallets which had sounded so distant in the hall, now came nearer and nearer. In the center of the immense room some men were talking and examining a peculiar kind of machine, the like of which Ruth and Agnes had never seen before, but which Mr. Kyle explained to them was a casing machine, telling them how and for what purpose it was to be used when put in place.

Colored men and women sat in chairs along the sides of this room, and opened leaves of tobacco carefully, examined it closely, and then put each kind in piles (between stakes) of like variety.

"This is called classing tobacco," Mr. Kyle explained, as they sauntered along, pausing occasionally to watch the busy workers; "and those who work at this must be expert enough to distinguish the difference in each leaf, and be able to place it in its proper position. From here it is taken to the casing room, where it is spread upon a large platform and sprinkled with a solution of licorice and granulated sugar, with a flavoring of dried peaches, or other preferred flavor, then tossed about and shaken together until perfectly distributed among the mass. After being thoroughly cased, it is thrown through trap-doors into the rolling-room below. The heat in the casing-room is very great, as the huge kettles, holding as much as fifty gallons of the mixture, have to be kept boiling by steam all the

time, and it must go on the tobacco while it is warm enough to spread."

They stood silent a moment, watching the workers, who kept their tongues wagging to the plying of their nimble fingers as they spread out the golden leaves. The largest leaves were reserved for wrappers for the plug tobacco. As they passed on to the rolling-room, Carl bowed right and left to those among the workmen whom he recognized, and stopped every now and then to make some friendly remark, as was his custom.

The rolling-room presented a scene not easily forgotten. Work benches eight and ten feet in length, and two and a half or three feet wide, were placed in rows throughout the apartment. These benches had two sides, generally two for each roller, who worked on the opposite side of the bench. The stemmers deftly stripped the leaf from the stem and passed it over to the roller, who spread out three or four leaves together, and by a dexterous movement shaped it in form of a plug, cut off the ragged end by a tobacco cutter—a small knife worked by lever—put on the wrapper, weighed it on a small scale which stood to the right of his bench, and then it was taken to the receiver, who stood at a table on the side of the same room, where it was again weighed that each lump might be uniformly perfect.

Mr. Kyle carefully explained everything which they did not understand. Ruth was silent and listened, but Agnes was bright and responding, and laughed and chatted, asking the most absurd questions, and enjoying everything with the energy and enthusiasm of a child.

"Don't you remember, Agnes," Carl said,

turning to her, "when you first came, Nellie's showing you several large cardboards with bits of tin in different shapes and colors pasted or clamped upon them, and a box of bright colored paper pictures—such names as 'Maud Muller,' 'Wild Turkey,' 'First Fruit,' 'Spanker,' 'Ada Bryan,' 'Old Rabbit Gum,' 'Old Rover,' 'Big Auger,' 'Elegant,' 'Lucille,' 'Ben Hur,' 'Golden Slipper,' 'Old Bob,' 'Ellen Fisher,' 'B. B. Best,' 'Old Oaken Bucket,' 'Waverly,' 'Top,' 'Level Best,' 'R. J. R.,' 'Rich and Waxy,' 'Stars and Bars,' 'Red Eye,' 'Red Seal,' 'Blue Stocking,' 'Clear Stone,' 'Henry Grady,' and—"

Agnes playfully threw her hands up and held them over her ears. "Do spare us, and don't, for my sake, go through the whole catalogue now.'

The carriage next stopped in the midst of a tangle of drays, carriages and covered wagons, standing before an immense brick building, one portion of which was occupied by at least eighty-five covered wagons and teams, and the other portion, which was cleanly swept, by long rows of tobacco, placed in piles with tags stuck on the end of a small stick, like so many little flags—these bearing the number of pounds in each pile and the farmer's name.

This much Agnes and Ruth could see through the broad open doorway, and when they got down and went in, they had a good view of the scene upon the floor, which was interesting and exciting beyond description.

It was as novel a sight to Ruth as to Agnes, for, notwithstanding she had been in the city so long, and it was not an unusual thing for ladies to visit the great warehouses to witness a "break," yet Ruth, for no particular reason, had

ever availed herself of the opportunity, and so this was a new phase of the city's life to her altogether—a phase of busy life she had never conceived of, and she found it a very exciting one.

The stentorian voice of the auctioneer rose above every other sound as he passed from pile to pile of tobacco, bidding it off to the manufacturers and dealers who followed him in crowds, while the farmers, with anxious faces, watched eagerly the progress of the sale, and groups of disinterested people looked on.

"Do you know what the auctioneer is saying, Cousin Agnes?" asked Nellie, raising her voice so as to make herself heard. "Can you understand a single word?"

"No, it is all Sanscrit to me," she said, shaking her head. Agnes stood a moment in silence, then turned to Carl and asked:

"When the tobacco is sold and taken from the warehouse where is it carried?"

He pointed to a number of drays standing before the open door, upon which were stacked a pile of oak split baskets of peculiar shape, about four feet square and four inches deep.

"The tobacco is taken to the factories on those baskets. Sometimes as much as five to eight hundred pounds are piled on a basket and hauled on the drays, one basket above another until the load is complete. When received in the factory, it is hung separately on racks, sometimes five deep, reaching from floor to ceiling, where it is allowed to dry thoroughly. You saw how it is managed at Mr. Raynor's factory?"

"Yes, I remember," returned Agnes—then hurriedly, "Come, let us be going; the odor of the tobacco sickens me."

CHAPTER XXX.

"Good-morning. True to time," said Carl, greeting Agnes and Ruth as they entered the breakfast-room very early the next morning, both prepared to attend the sunrise Easter service at the Moravian church. He drew two chairs out from the table, on either side of him, for them to sit down.

"Nell and I have breakfasted, but we'll wait for you two. Are you quite sure, little coz, that you feel equal to going?" he asked, turning to Agnes. "Nerves all right, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, quite sure. I never felt better. Do I look like an invalid?" she laughed, turning her face glowing with life, sparkle and happiness full upon him.

"Not a bit of it—on the contrary, you look unusually bright and radiant; positively beautiful."

"Thanks. I wasn't angling for a compliment. I think when you visited Blarney Castle in the Emerald Isle, you must have kissed the Blarney Stone," she said, and gayly repeated:

> "There is a stone there
> That whoever kisses
> Oh, he never misses
> To grow eloquent—"

Carl laughed. Yes, I did, indeed, kiss the identical stone, the one Sir Walter Scott saluted, on the northeast angle of the tower, and which bears the date 1703. Since which time I've been 'a clever spouter,' or 'an out and outer.'"

"To be left alone," Agnes hastily concluded for him; "so I'll leave you alone."

Then Nellie diverted her attention.

"You little wretch, Nell. How in the world did you manage to get up so early? I thought you were in bed and sound asleep."

"Oh, Julia woke me when she woke you and Cousin Ruth. I wanted to hear the horns, but I didn't."

"What horns? What are you talking about?"

"Why don't you know the horns the Moravians blow at the corners of the streets every Easter morning, about three o'clock? But they only blow them in Salem, and I don't think we are near enough to hear them."

Carl explained the Moravian custom which Nellie alluded to, and Agnes said:

"Well, I am really sorry I didn't hear them. Why didn't you have me up in time, and I could have gone somewhere where I could have heard."

"I think it was raining a little about that hour," said Carl.

"Raining! Well, is it now?" she asked in dismay.

"No, but it's real cloudy, Cousin Agnes, and looks as if it were going to pour down rain every minute," said Nellie.

"Surely not. That's too provoking!" Agnes rose, went to the window and looked out, then came back, frowning a little.

"I do believe it is going to rain. "What shall we do—go now, or wait and see if the weather means to settle the question for us?"

"We'll go now. I don't think it is going to rain," said Carl, "and even if it does there'll be service in the church, which is waterproof, and no danger of our getting a drenching."

Ruth had risen from the table and was drawing on her gloves.

"If we are ready to go," she said, "we would better be starting. I believe we are late already."

When they reached the Square in the old historical town, an air of disoccupation yet pervaded it, and it was as still as death. The weird moonlight seemed to bring out more vividly and picturesquely the antiquity of the low gabled houses by which it was flanked on the right and left.

They drove to the upper part on the left of the Square, and got out in front of the Moravian church, facing a short narrow street, where the impressive services were to be held. As yet but few persons had gathered, but a blue-coated policeman moved mechanically up and down the space before the church, through the many paned windows of which struggled a dim, wavering light. Some children very quietly sat upon the stone steps of the little arch-covered stoop jutting out from the broad portal of the edifice, and from which arch swung a large globe lantern brightly lighted.

As the clock in the church gable struck five and the bell in the steeple emphasized the hour, the people began to gather, not by twos or threes or even by dozens at a time, but by hundreds, until all available standing room in front and on either side of the church was a dense mass of breathing humanity. But there was no impatient jostling, no disturbing sound, and even low-whispered talking for the time was hushed; but over all there was a holy expectancy—that kind of restraint which the remembrance of the occasion had put upon every worshipper present, and which seemed to uplift the soul into that many-toned peace which one finds in the spiritual

atmosphere where one breathes naught but draughts of pure love.

When, half an hour later, the door of the church opened and the musicians with their brass instruments came silently down the steps and took their positions in front, near the entrance way, there was a momentary hum and stir, and then amid the solemn hush which followed, that grand and consecrated man of God, the revered pastor of the church, came out and stood on the little stoop beneath the glowing lamp, facing the vast audience.

Then he read in a voice of pathetic cadence the joyous message, "Christ is risen from the dead," and a thrill of ecstacy, mingled with gratitude and love, struck through the fragrant air, and seemed to find a responsive echo of thankgsiving in every gladsome heart. With rapt attention thousands of souls listened with reverent, upturned faces to catch every word of the sweet, glad tidings of Him who gave His life as a ransom for all, as, with the holy passion vibrant in his voice, it fell from the lips of the beloved pastor.

After the choir had sung, with a delicious strain of harmony, the beautiful anthem that had been chosen to fittingly commemorate the most significant day of the Christian year, a moment's quiet again fell over the expectant multitude.

Then the vast assembly noiselessly and rapidly formed in line, and headed by the band of musicians rendering sweet music, marched four abreast to the Moravian graveyard, two blocks beyond the church.

Conspicuous among the great crowd were over

two hundred cadets and officers in full uniform, from the Military School, whose graceful bearing and regular tramp, tramp, tramp on the hard pavement lent a nameless charm to the immense procession.

Down the lovely cedar-bordered avenue the orderly throng passed and entered the large gateway, bearing over its white arched entrance in gilt letters the inscription, "I Am the Resurrection and the Life."

Without noise or confusion the multitude filed in and congregated along the broad sanded walk, that gleamed snow-white amongst the green graves lying side by side, each with its little white marble tablet resting prone upon the head of the grave, and each with its exquisite floral design placed there the previous day by gentle, loving hands.

There could scarcely be imagined a more beautiful and impressive ceremony in the early morning than this Easter service, with its sweet, sacred music from a band of many instruments accompanying the singing of beautiful anthems in tones of subdued passionate expression.

The deep silence, the vivid ideality of the place and hour, the waiting audience and the solemn service, drew the thoughts away from earth and all the natural longings and aspirations of this life to the divine, in spirit waves that seemed to break fresh out of the crystal sea of life, and roll onward and upward till they struck upon the foot-stool of the listening Lord.

The morning was balmy and hazy, and pure white clouds, like soft filmy veils, trailed themselves across the violet blue sky, now hiding, now revealing the blue canopy, and at last grow-

ing dim and fading out altogether into ethereal nothingness. Ruth turned to Agnes and whispered:

"Isn't it all so beautiful and grand? and it brings so vividly to my mind the last great day when 'a great multitude, which no man can number, and all nations and kindreds, and people and tongues, will stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.' Oh, how I wish that everyone could witness this scene. I am sure they would never forget it."

Agnes did not move or answer, but stood like one dreaming a beautiful dream—listening and yet not listening. Presently she turned and looked at Ruth, as if to speak to her, but she simply smiled and touched Carl on the sleeve and his eyes followed the direction of hers.

Ruth's face was radiant, her whole soul seemed to be shining in her trembling eyes, for, as she stood there amidst that dense throng in the soft, lush morn, the melodious, far-reaching voice of the pastor falling upon her attentive ear, the strange scene awed and thrilled her and she seemed lifted up above herself, and then, somehow, she felt that deep longing—that quenchless curiosity, that dauntless inquiry to look into the unseen world beyond—a world of eternal light peopled with beautiful and radiant beings. The serene repose of her lovely face and the abstraction of her look told that, for the moment, she was lost in blissful unconsciousness, and that the solemnity of the scene had strangely wrought upon her feelings. To her—as she had said to Agnes—in sunny vividness appeared the vision of another day—glorious, grand, triumphant—

the Final Judgment, when the silent graves must give up their long-sleeping dead, and in newness of life come forth to appear before the awful tribunal of the Great Judge, who proclaimed to all the world nearly two thousand years ago, "I am the resurrection and the life."

Suddenly the blended sound of many voices singing the Gloria Excelsis recalled her wandering thoughts to the scene about her.

Day was dawning, and in the eastern sky a soft, amber glow was spreading itself above a long dark bank of purple clouds, which soon paled and faded out, leaving only a rosy glow. Just then the flashing sunbeams sparkled through the budding, dew-laden branches of the distant forest. Every tree, to the tips of the slender twigs, stood out in a blaze of glory.

Overhead the cedar branches, giving out that mysterious rustling sound peculiar to them, bent in long graceful curves, and when the soft perfumed breeze swayed their green plumage, myriads of crystal drops fell from them and jewelled the vine-covered graves beneath. Flashing and glittering in the resplendent glory, the King of day, slowly but triumphantly, rose above the distant tree-tops just as the beautiful and impressive service came to an end. All the fair, shimmering world seemd brightening into greater and greater loveliness, Ruth was thinking, when at that moment, as quietly and orderly as the vast multitude had gathered, the long procession rapidly marshalled into line, and as silently and solemnly wended its way out of "the sacred city of the dead" and dispersed, each carrying with him, one could but hope, a grateful melody of

joy and love in his heart and the blessed assurance, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

Carl, Agnes and Ruth made no motion to join or follow the silent procession as it passed outside the enclosure, but lingered behind as many others had done to admire the floral decorations and enjoy a little longer the cool restfulness and the stillness and beauty of the place.

Relieved of the deep sense of awe and solemnity which had held them for the last hour, they sauntered up and down the white-sanded aisles amongst the graves, admiring the beautiful flowers—for gentle hands had brought the fairest and the best—and reading the epitaphs on the slabs—everyone alike—at the head of the graves. Many of the little square tablets, those immediately underneath the venerable cedars, were hoary with age, and so weather-stained that the dates and names of the silent tenants were almost entirely effaced.

As the rosy flush of morn deepened, there was imparted to this sacred spot of rare loveliness, a beauty indescribable, and the golden gleam of light which filtered down through the lofty dome of cedars seemed to come from the very gates of Paradise, revealing glimpses far inward.

In their walk they passed an elderly lady dressed in heavy mourning, kneeling beside a freshly turfed mound tenderly arranging some flowers in a stone vase. Ruth watched her a moment, her eyes filling with sympathetic tears, and when they had gone a little way she turned to Agnes and said:

"Oh, how my heart goes out to that poor, grief-stricken woman. I feel as if I want to go

to her, and try to comfort her; and yet, I know there is but One that can do that in an hour like this." Then, after a little pause, "Do you know, I have sometimes thought if our human ears were not so deaf, or perhaps, if we could hush the loud death-knell tolling in our hearts, over the new-made grave of the loved one, we might hear the joy-bells of heaven ringing downward paens of victory as angel fingers held the pearly gates ajar for a ransomed soul to enter."

Agnes did not answer, but she strolled on silently until they had reached the eastern boundary of the graveyard and then paused, and, while they stood talking they saw Nellie coming toward them, holding by the hand a tall bright-eyed, sweet-faced lady who seemed to follow her protestingly.

"Cousin Ruth! Cousin Ruth!" cried Nellie, with an air of triumph as she came up, "here is Miss Lula. I heard you say yesterday you wanted to see her about something—I don't know what—but I saw her out there," she turned round describing the place with a wave of her hand, "and so I brought her to see you. Now you can tell her what you want."

Ruth laughed quietly, and after greeting the lady cordially and making some excuses for Nellie's impetuosity, she turned and introduced her to Agnes and Carl as Miss Lula Hastings.

"I have met Miss Hastings before," said Carl, "but it was several years ago and I suppose she has forgotten me. I am very happy to renew my acquaintance with you, Miss Hastings," he added gallantly, still holding his hat in his hand.

"Thank you." Then they talked of their former acquaintance a little, finding they had many friends in common, and then Carl said:

"We were just debating, when you came up, Miss Hastings, whether or not we should go over to Woodland Cemetery or return home."

"If you are going to see the decorations," she said, "I think you will see them at their best this morning—before the sun has spoiled them. They are handsomer this Easter than I have ever seen them."

"Shall we go, or are you all too tired?" he asked, looking significantly at Agnes.

"No, no, we are not a bit tired. Do let's go, Carl," implored Nellie, speaking for herself and the others, "I am just crazy to go."

Ruth looked inclined to demur, but Agnes said, "I think we may go for a little while. It is early yet, and I should like to see the decorations, too. What time is it?"

Carl took out his watch, sprung back the jewelled lid, and bent the crystal face to her gaze.

"Just seven o'clock," she said, with a questioning glance at Ruth.

"Oh, yes, we'll have plenty of time," she said, "if you care to go. But we mustn't stay too long. We must get back in time to attend service. I think you said you wished to go somewhere to-day."

"Well, it is entirely as you two shall decide about going to the Cemetery," said Carl, replacing his hat.

"Go, go," cried Nellie, clutching him by the hand. "Do please let's go, Carl."

"Miss Hastings, will you come with us?" Agnes asked, turning to her, having decided within herself that they would go. "We shall be pleased to have you."

"Yes, won't you come?" Ruth and Carl both added, the former pleadingly.

"Thank you. It is very kind of you, but I can't go this morning; I'm afraid I've detained you already, but Nellie said you wished to ask me something special"—looking at Ruth—"and she would not allow me to escape until I had seen you."

Nellie gave her a shy look, smiling.

"It is nothing so very important, Miss Lula," said Ruth pleasantly, "and I will speak with you about it when I return to the Academy on Tuesday."

"Very well. Now I will wish you good-morning." She bowed to them and turned to leave, when Carl said:

"Please allow me to accompany you, Miss Hastings, as far as our way leads together. I shall have to see our driver, who is waiting near the Square, and tell him to come for us at the Cemetery. If you will excuse me"—to Agnes and Ruth—"I'll not keep you waiting long." As soon as they were out of sight Agnes turned to Ruth and asked:

"Who is your friend Miss Hastings"

"She is a very charming and admirable young lady who was formerly a pupil at the Academy, but now teaches there, and also lives in this city. She is a most practicable, sensible girl, and I believe everybody loves her."

"I thought as much," said Agnes. "She has agreeable manners, and a very sweet and attractive face—and one's face, as a rule, I believe, is quite a correct index to one's character. We generally judge by what we see—don't you?"

"Yes, oftener than I should," she said hesitatingly, "for outward appearances are sometimes

deceptive, misleading, and the rule of judging people and things by just what we see is by no means infallible. But come, let us get out of this sunshine. We can wait for Carl under those trees yonder. I think it would have been wise in us if we had brought our parasols."

When they had reached the group of trees indicated, they stood silent a moment looking about them.

"This place is exquisitely beautiful," said Agnes, "and I wonder some poet doesn't celebrate it in verse."

"So one poet has—Mr. John Henry Boner, a native of this town, but now a well-known poet and literary writer of New York City. He has written some beautiful lines entitled, 'How oft I've trod that shadowy way,' and I will show them to you sometime. I have them in my scrapbook. I know several of the verses and will repeat them to you if you wish me. You may appreciate them more by hearing them on or near the spot about which they were written."

"Please do, and I will follow you as you recite them."

Then Ruth repeated, very low and sweetly, several of the verses of that little gem from Mr. Boner's gifted pen, which are as follows:

"Full many a peaceful place I've seen,
But the most restful spot I know
Is one where thick dark cedars grow
In an old graveyard cool and green.

The way to the sequestered place
Is arched with boughs of that sad tree,
And there the trivial steps of glee
Must sober to a pensive pace.

How oft I've trod that shadowy way
In bygone years—sometimes while yet
The grass with morning dew was wet
And sometimes at the close of day."

CHAPTER XXXI.

Just then Carl returned, walking briskly, his face flushed.

"Well, I'm back again," he said, taking off his hat and running his fingers through his hair.

"I sent Virgil round with the carriage, and he'll wait for us at the upper gate of the cemetery. I think we'll need fans and parasols before we get back."

"And the idea of mamma insisting on my bringing a wrap," said Agnes; "I knew I shouldn't need it."

They turned to the left, leaving the beautiful Moravian graveyard behind them, and went along a lonely winding walk which swerved downward and then swept gracefully upward around a deep ravine, filled with tangled vine, primeval undergrowth and tall trees whose unpruned branches had begun to thrill and expand under the renewal of the forces of nature. And down in the sheltered depths of the ravine where the wind of centuries had held their tryst, amongst the beautiful and sweet freshness, the gurgling of a hidden stream made a musical stir which was borne out on the budding fragrance of the spring air. There was a rustle, and suddenly a gray squirrel raced over the brown leaves, ran up a tall tree, and disappeared. To the left a narrow pathway, seemingly but little used, led up the hillside to a clump of stunted cedars, where a few white slabs were sharply defined against their evergreen foliage.

"There is the strangers' burying-ground," said Carl, making a quick gesture with his hand as they passed it. "It is a lonely spot."

"Yes, it looks neglected and ghost-like enough," returned Ruth. "Indeed, one of the most painful things to me is to think how soon we are forgotten after we are dead. Comparatively so few live in the hearts or memory of the world and sometimes of their friends, after they have passed off the stage of life. Only those—the few it seems that have found the way to peace and rest and fullness of being along the path of service. But if we can truthfully echo the sentiment of Paracelsus, who as he dies exclaims,

'I press God's lamp close to my breast; its splendor soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom: I shall emerge one day,'

perhaps we should be willing to die, content to be forgotten even by those we love best."

"I don't know," said Carl skeptically; "I think I should like to be remembered always—as long as the great laws of life and death and fate are not suspended. Somehow, I can't help wishing to perpteuate my name—my memory, 'adown the centuries of coming years.'"

"Then you would better be up and doing, young man," laughed Agnes, laying her hand playfully on his arm, "and with your spotless reputation and good name to start with, carve for youself an enduring name in the Temple of Fame, and though 'Fame is smoke,' 'Its fumes are frankincense to human thoughts,' so says Byron. Nothing is impossible to him who wills, you know. One's desires are often the precursors of the things which one is capable of performing, and an intense anticipation of them transforms possibility into reality. Don't you think so? You may have to wait, perhaps, for

half a century before winning the admiring plaudits of mankind, but then just think of the numbers of great men who toiled and struggled on in obscurity for years, full five, perhaps six, decades before the world ever heard of them. Yes, your time, too, may come, and before your hair is silvered with age. Just consider yourself amply sufficient for the deed you undertake, and you will certainly succeed."

Carl stopped and looked at her, his face aglow with the emotion which Agnes' enthusiasm had kindled in him.

"That was sweet and brave of you, little Cousin," he said, smiling down into her bright eyes. "I really didn't know you had such a good opinion of me—that you cared so much. You have made me think better of myself already, and—" he paused, then added with vindicative emphasis—"and others shall think better of me, too. You are aware that mother was anxious that I should enter the ministry; but feeling I wasn't called to 'hammer the sacred desk,' and was not that way inclined, she left it to me to consult my own individual bent and choose for myself, and of the 'three black graces'—Law, Medicine and Ministry—I have chosen medicine, and since the pursuit is voluntary and I have a distinctive taste for that profession, I feel that I shall succeed."

"And what does Cousin Ralph say to the career you have chosen?" she asked, reflectively.

"Oh, he is perfectly satisfied. Before I went abroad, I asked him one day what profession he thought best for me to follow—for I was anxious to please him, too, in this—and his reply was, 'whatever you have a taste and capacity for; if

it's making brick, why make brick. I prefer that you should be entirely uninfluenced by even a suggestion from me, and I believe you will be more apt to choose unerringly.' Those were his words, and I haven't forgotten them. Of course, he doesn't claim that free choice and purpose are proof infallible against failure, but he says that failure is less likely to occur if one selects a calling that is not distasteful to him."

"Well, I earnestly hope you have chosen for the best, and I do believe you have. I can't help thinking that some people are a failure incarnate from first to last, but you don't happen to be one of them. Now, I don't say this to flatter, or please you, but simply because I believe it."

"I assure you, Agnes," he said, "from this time forth I shall try harder than ever to deserve your good opinion, and do my best to make, if not a brilliant, at least an honorable career."

"All right; I'll remember this, and it is a promise from which I shall not release you, and when you have reached the goal, I will see that you have your totem pole, lofty and elaborate, to commemorate your noble deeds," she laughed. "But honestly, Carl, I think there is something grand and noble in one's carving his own fortune, and rising higher and higher in the scales of usefulness and human knowledge, in defiance of every obstacle. I am perfectly in sympathy with this pretty sentiment of the poet:

> "Whoever with an earnest soul
> Strives for some end, from this low world afar
> Still upward travels though he miss the goal
> And strays—but travels toward a star!"

But you, Carl—why you have nothing to hinder you, for surely the gods and good fortune

have made the way wide open to you, so there is no reason why you should fail."

"Yes, but I must climb, step by step like any other plodder if I would win," he said.

"True; but you will not have to contend with that curse—the most barren of all to a struggling soul—the curse of want of money to smooth your way. Think of the thousands of bright intellects so fettered, thousands filled with noble and lofty aspirations, longing so eagerly to reach a higher level, and yet the stern necessity of earning a brief existence keeps them too busy to devote to the beloved aspiration of their lives. I think what heights that sweet poet, Sydney Lanier, whose life was so full of promise, might have reached, even with ill health, had he not been hedged in for the lack of gold to smooth his way. Oh, cruel, cruel fortune, why curse some—often the worthy and brave—and heap high favors upon others who squander them in the whirlpool of idle pleasures?" She sighed a little, then walked on in silence.

They had leisurely ascended the hill by the winding driveway which led up to the cemetery, and now came to a double vault in a steep hillside. The vault had a frontage of stone and granite, and the heavy iron doors were securely fastened. An ornamental iron railing ran along three sides of the flat brick roof, and some cone-shaped cedars had sprung up between clefts in the roof. Between two of these, and immediately over the door of the stone vault, stood a life-sized marble figure, representing Hope, one hand pointing heavenward, the other resting on an anchor at her side. There was a sweet look of mute appeal in the calm uplifted face as if it

held the connecting link between the mysterious Beyond and the crumbling framework of humanity engulfed in the awful silence of the tomb beneath. Luxuriant ivy clung about the sombre looking front, and a few tendrils strayed downward and mixed its dark green foliage with the tender green of the periwinkle sparely sprinkled with pale blue blossoms.

It was such a quaint looking place that the little party stopped and stood impressively silent a moment, regarding it.

Agnes pressed her hand to her heart and shivered, "Oh, if we could escape all this," she said. "Death, I mean. Why must we die? It seems so hard!"

"Let me remind you of a quotation from that marvellous production of Browning's Paracelsus from which Ruth quoted just now—where Festus trys to console his friend—perhaps it may console or comfort you," said Carl, with an involuntary softening of his voice.

"What is it?" she asked, almost plaintively.

"He says, 'No man man must hope for exemption from trial; that to be mortal is to be plied with trials manifold. It is our trust,' he goes on to say, 'that there is yet another world to mend all error and mischance, but here it seems that everyone needs trials to keep his soul from going to sleep, as a traveler in the snow needs shaking lest he fall and die.'"

Agnes did not attempt to answer him, but after a moment's silence, Ruth said:

"It is a great comfort, I think, to know that the infancy only of the soul is spent on earth. Drummond says that earth is the rehearsal for heaven. That the eternal beyond is the eternal

here; and the street life, the home life, the business life, the city life, in all the varied range of its activity, are an apprenticeship for the city of God. There is no other apprenticeship. To know how to serve Christ in these is to practice dying. So this life is merely proving what sort of souls we have. To me this is a most comforting belief." Then, looking at Carl, she asked: "Was it not Paracelsus who said, 'I go to prove my soul?' And that's what we are doing now."

"Yes; but Paracelsus believed that the human heart was formed to hate rather than to love, until God taught him in the very throes of death that power without love would be hell. His friend, Festus, who was willing to sacrifice so much for him—even to waive all future reward—saw some things more clearly than did Paracelsus." His tone was deeply reverential, as was always the case when he spoke of sacred things and the dead.

"I am afraid there are too many of us, even as was Paracelsus before God taught him his error—pride of soul, longing for power, despising the common run of men and thus unconsciously separating ourselves from God," replied Ruth, her tone touched with sadness. "God is teaching us all—poor, slow-paced scholars as we are—like He taught Paracelsus, not in the way we are seeking, but as His providence sees fitting; and it is a pity that we cannot see the hand of God all along the present, trust the future to Him and thus find peace." A softer light came into her eyes as she went on, and her voice was suddenly tremulous with a pathos she could not repress.

At that moment she happened to look up at

Carl, and something in his face—she knew not what it was; some inward struggle, she fancied, to conquer a strange agitation which for the moment seemed to absorb his very soul—made her withdraw her eyes from his searching gaze, but in spite of herself a soft glow stole into her cheek, though she showed not the least sign of embarrassment. The next moment he came closer to her, and stood for a moment as if trying to formulate his thoughts into speech, then, with the courteous, winning manner so natural to him, he took her hand and drew it through his arm, and with a sudden change of tone said, "Come, let us follow Agnes and Nellie up to the cemetery, and allow me to assist you up that hill," nodding in the direction.

Ruth glanced hurriedly around.

"Oh, I didn't know they had left us. How long ago?"

"About five minutes."

"Yes, let us follow them. But, thank you, I can climb that little hill without the least assistance," she said, disengaging her hand from his arm.

And then they walked on in silence, side by side, up the winding ascent.

They had no sooner reached the cemetery grounds proper, than they perceived Agnes standing tiptoed beside a small square enclosure, peering over the low picket fence and trying to read the accentuated letters on a discolored gravestone within. Careful hands had recently removed the infringing grass and weeds, and profusely scattered sweet spring flowers over the smooth green turf. The sound of footsteps behind her made her turn and look round.

"Oh, is that you two?" she laughed roguishly. "I've just been singing, 'Come ye disconsolate.'"

"Why did you and Nellie slip off and leave us?" Ruth asked, with smiling reproach. "You vanished like ghosts, and I didn't know you had gone until Carl told me. But where is Nellie?" she asked, glancing uneasily about. "Mrs. Grayson particularly charged me not to lose sight of her, or to let her get away from me."

"And now you've done both," laughed Agnes. "But the idea of any one trying to keep up with Nell—" Agnes continued, still peering over the enclosure and trying to make out the inscription on the weather-stained slab. "She was here a minute ago picking some of those wild dasies and violets over there," pointing to the spot, "and said she was gathering them to put on her little sisters' grave, and I suppose there is where she is now."

"Nell's all right," said Carl readily, as they moved a few paces further on, and with one impulse all three stopped to look at a tall, massive monument of gray granite, and Carl read aloud the names, "Louise and Mary," carved on the beautiful polished surface of the shaft.

"Handsome and imposing," said Agnes; "I like it."

"Yes, that is one of the handsomest monuments in the cemetery," he said. "There is another, very beautiful and elegant, further on, and we'll come to it presently. It is the handsomest one in the grounds. It was cut in Massa Carrasa, Italy, by Professor Pietro Barsanti."

"Is that really true?" she asked dubiously. "Dear, sweet Italy, how I am carried back to

beautiful Sarrento — that perfect paradise of beauty where we had such a lovely time last summer. Come and show me, and let me look upon something that is from the sunny land for which I cherish such a fondness. Whereabout is it?"

"Have a little more patience, Agnes," said Ruth, smiling, and taking her by the arm, drew her back as she started off. "We'll come to it in due time. There is another place—in fact, two of them—I want you to see, and they are on our way to the Barsanti monument."

"Pray, why so particular about my seeing the two you mention, darling?" she asked, turning round, her face assuming an interested look.

"Because there is such a pathetic story connected with the lives of the two young girls whose graves I want you to visit with me. Although I did not know them personally, yet I never come here that I do not go to their graves. Sometimes I take flowers, and I'm sorry I haven't any with me this morning; but I know they have been generously remembered by their friends."

"But what is the story? Go on and tell me."

"It is a very sad one," said Ruth, "and the singular coincident of their deaths makes the story peculiarly pathetic and impressive."

When Ruth had finished the recital she looked at Agnes, whose face was full of a strange solemn light—but all she said was:

"Oh, how sad!" She could not say more, for her eyes had melted and her mouth quivered, then a look of peculiar tenderness came into her sympathetic face.

They walked on silently, listening to the birds

singing their Easter anthems in softened tones from the tall trees now greening with life, inhaling the sweet scent of the flowers, pausing now and again to read an inscription on a stately shaft, or some modest slab, and quietly enjoying the sunny glisten and unspeakable serenity which filled the beautiful scene. It was one of Spring's loveliest days.

In the silence that followed, they had reached a velvety green square, on the slightly-sloping crest of the hill, and in one corner of which was a solitary grave, marked by a simple but pretty shaft delicately carven on the four sides in crowns and palm leaves, while there was a graceful wreath of ivy leaves running around the capstone.

"This is Miss Farions' grave," said Ruth; "and Miss Marsden's is a little further on to the left. Both the shafts are exactly alike, the only difference being in the inscription; and both were placed in position about the same time."

Noticing that one of the Easter lilies had fallen from the little marble urn at the foot of the grave, she stooped and replaced it, then tenderly rearranged some of the thirsty flowers and placed them so the stems might reach the water in the half-filled vase. She looked very beautiful kneeling there, Agnes and Carl both thought—in the midst of the wide peace and sylvan beauty all about them. When she got up and stood beside Agnes, she said in a low, wavering voice:

"It is such a blessed hope we have, such a comforting privilege to know that those who live in the Lord do not see each other for the last time."

They passed on, meeting several groups of people strolling about the grounds.

"There is the Barsanti monument, Agnes," said Carl, for they had reached it while they were talking. "What do you think of it?" She held up her gray-gloved hand to shade her eyes, looked critically up at the exquisite female figure gracefully poised upon the three-cornered pedestal, then walked slowly around it.

"It is very beautiful, indeed," she said, after a few seconds' pause. "The folds of the drapery are simply perfect—and the face, isn't it lovely! So suggestive of inward peace and contentment—and repose—yes, that's the word, repose. One can easily fancy, too, that the rose she is holding has life and fragrance, it is so natural."

They lingered here a few minutes longer; then strolled on to the spot where Carl's father and sisters were interred—a quiet, lovely place and just now full of silent rays of golden light, falling through the overcresting branches of the trees and checkering the white marble slabs beneath.

"I wonder where Nellie has gone," said Ruth; "I see she has been here," looking down at the flowers. "She is like a bird—just goes here and there wherever her fancy takes her. I don't believe she knows the meaning of such a thing as fear."

"I will walk with you and Agnes to the carriage," said Carl, "then I'll look for her. I don't think she can be very far."

"No need to do that," said Agnes. "There she is now." As she spoke, Nellie came running toward them, holding up both hands, as if she meant to embrace them. "Where have you been, you little sinner?" Agnes continued. "Your Cousin Ruth has been in a perfect ache about you."

"Where have you all been, you'd better say," Nellie pouted, quite out of breath. "I've been all over the cemetery, and I never saw any of you once. I believe everybody has gone home but us, and I'm ready to go now, for I'm awfully hungry."

"Very likely," said Carl dryly. "Come, we are going home now. You don't mind you'll be late for Sunday School again."

"Can't help it," she returned, and then she broke away from them, and when they reached the carriage Nellie had got in, taken off her hat and was fanning herself vigorously. She smiled and yawned drowsily in reply to some bantering remark Agnes addressed to her, and during the drive homeward sat so mute and still they thought she had gone to sleep.

Mr. and Mrs. Glenwood attended pretty St. Paul's that morning, but Agnes accompanied the other members of the family to the First Presbyterian Church, which they reached just as the last reverberation of the church bells in the vicinity died upon the air.

A moment later, as they walked slowly down the soft carpeted aisle of the church, the deep trembling notes of the organ broke the stillness and the choir began singing the joyous message, the key-note of all, "Christ is risen from the dead;" and the pealing anthem, as it burst from the swelling organ tone, interwoven with the pure rich notes of the human voice, ascended with the perfume of the flowers, filling the beautiful room with a flood of sweet melody.

Through the rich hues of amber, violet, ruby and gold of the stained gothic windows, the sun

shone, and flung radiant colors over the quiet subdued-toned sanctuary.

Nellie had remained after the Sunday School exercises were over to attend the morning service, and was already in her uncle's pew when he, with the other members of the family, entered.

She rose at once, smiled, and moved to the furtherest end of the semicircular seats and took the remaining unoccupied chair, after the others were seated. All through the service she sat very demure and silent, now and then exchanging cautious glances with some of her little Sunday School companions who occupied the seats immediately in front of her, each one wearing a certain sober church-going air which the older people about them affected.

Occasionally an aureole of violet light played over Nellie's golden curly head and face, and made her look like some beautiful apparition that might vanish at any moment.

Everyone present seemed to follow with a hushed and solemn expectancy the words of the eloquent preacher from text unto conclusion with the most rapt and absorbing devotion.

When he had resumed his seat, there was an audible stir, a movement, a rustle in each pew, as if the occupant wished to convey through his eyes and manner his approval and delight to as many of the people about him as possible. There were moist eyes and tremulous lips, too; and after the doxology was sung and the benediction which came after was over, the congregation quietly dispersed to the sound of triumphant music. while the spirit of sweet peace which had stolen into the hearts of every listener as he sat

in the sacred sanctuary, beneath the exquisite harmony of the music, and the matchless eloquence of the minister, lingered many a day with him; and, then in soft sweet echoes, it seemed to melt and sink down into his very soul, enriching it, and chiming continually the hope of a more perfect day.

CHAPTER XXXII.

About two weeks after Easter, Mr. and Mrs. Gordon gave a magnificent reception in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Glenwood and their daughter Agnes; and while it was one of the many brilliant fetes which they had attended, and which had been given by their former friends in their honor, yet no social event had happened in the city for quite a long time that caused such a stir and ripple of excitement, and that was looked forward to with such pleasurable anxiety.

It was late in the afternoon of the day of Mrs. Gordon's reception—a day that had dawned bright and beautiful—and Agnes and Carl were in the sitting-room, the latter reclining upon a low, luxurious divan with all the ease and abandon of an Indian Rajah or Persian Lord, while Agnes read to him with apparently absorbing interest. But presently, with a sudden impulse, she closed the book and laid it down.

"There! I'll not read another line," she said. "I've read long enough, and besides I don't believe you are listening, anyway." Then, eyeing him with a mocking smile, she added:

"What a voluptuary you are, Carl. I wonder some good magician don't transport you to the Oriental realms and transform you into a veritable prince, and while you lounge under silken canopies listening to delicious music and watching the graceful movements of your dancing slaves, study to your heart's content the incomparable pleasures of an ideal idleness."

He half raised himself from the couch, and

supporting his handsome head upon one outspread palm, turned his smiling face toward her.

"When the gracious gods, or your good magician, accord to me such a happy fate, I shall choose you, my pretty cousin, as one of the honored maids to hold the silken canopy above my royal head, or wave the cooling palm to refresh me," he laughed. "You know the old saying that goes, 'Best ease is free ease'—and that's what I am enjoying now."

"I'm afraid you'd find your labor and pains thrown away," she laughed back, her own attitude full of light grace and ease. "Besides, you should remember *vivre ce ne' est pas respirer, c'est agir.*"

"Oh, never fear. I have already betaken myself to works of serious reflection," he said, rising.

Before she could reply the door opened, and Mrs. Glenwood, with stately dignity and a smile on her cold, proud face, entered the room, and glancing around to assure herself there were no visitors present, said, turning to Agnes:

"I came, my dear, to consult with you about your dress for Mrs. Gordon's reception this evening. Have you decided what you shall wear?"

"Not yet, Mamma. Adele has taken several evening dresses to my room for me to select from, but I left it with her to decide which it shall be."

"Suppose you let me decide the momentous question for you, Cousin," said Carl, laughing. While I'm not an authority in such matters, since I do not keep myself informed as to the latest ukases of feminine attire, but I'm said to have at least first-rate taste with regard to a woman's get up—that is, the general effect her presence

produces, whether or not it is pleasing and artistic."

As Agnes listened to him, her bright eyes sparkled. "Well, I do believe I will allow you to set the seal of your aristocratic approval upon my toilet this evening, by selecting it yourself. I think I'll have Adele to display for your inspection some of my choicest evening dresses, so that you can choose fairly what will enhance my personal charms, and show them to the best advantage."

"Pshaw! you are amusing yourself at my expense," he said quietly, his color rising; "but seriously, I mean what I say. I don't think the secret of good dressing lies in many toilets, but in suitable and immaculate ones."

"Well, you know mine are many, suitable and immaculate," she said, adjusting her bracelet, and still smiling. "But you shall decide."

"Well, whatever you wear, my dear," said Mrs. Glenwood, turning to Agnes, "I particularly wish that you shall look well this evening —in fact, surpass yourself. I have my reasons for desiring this."

Agnes looked at her mother with a bright smile.

"Why, Mamma, I never knew you to be so particular about my dress before. Of course I'll wear what you wish and try to look my best. But why is the matter so very important on this occasion, if I may ask?"

"You are aware, my dear, that it is the sense of sight which is first appealed to, and as this is the avenue that leads directly to the heart, the chances are always in favor of the person who cultivates an attractive exterior," she said evasively. "Any woman who dares to hold herself

superior to dress, is a very singular creature, I think; and I must assuredly concur with the lady who said not long since that it matters not how many personal charms a woman may have, or how many gifts she may possess, if she is careless or indifferent about her dress it obscures her every charm and gift and leaves her defenceless; and while a perfectly costumed woman is in a certain sense a recognized power, and doubtless is given a wider sphere for usefulness and a greater influence for good than her more shabbily attired neighbor, yet it is essential at the same time that she must carry with her choicest apparel an air of refinement if she would hope to gain attention. It is not so much the lack of funds as the lack of artistic appreciation that places a woman at a decided disadvantage. I don't believe that a gentleman, or any one, ever grows too old to appreciate the charms of a well-dressed woman."

"Do you, Carl?" Agnes asked, glancing at him with a bewitching laugh.

"Never," he said.

"Well, Mamma, I am quite ready to acquiesce in your decision in the matter of my toilet on this special occasion, but please permit me to stipulate just one thing." Agnes sank back in her chair and began fanning herself.

"What is it?" her mother asked, smiling down at her as one humoring the caprice of a spoiled child.

"That I shall wear no jewels of any kind," she said with a light laugh.

"I do not quite understand you," returned Mrs. Glenwood. "I know of no diamonds so fine as yours, and these I wish you to wear this even-

ing," she added in a tone of decision. Then, after discussing the subject in all its bearing, she finally settled that Agnes' dress was to be a pale blue satin with tiny thistles woven in silver threads, and trimmed in lace. The magnificent parure of diamonds, the gift of her father two years before, would be sufficient, she said, without the aid of other ornaments of any kind.

Mrs. Glenwood gave a sigh of relief, as if she had got rid of a most intolerable burden and she was glad the ordeal was well over with. Then she turned to leave the room, but paused and looked back.

"Agnes, I think you would better go and lie down now and rest until tea, so you will feel refreshed for the evening. Carl will excuse you, I am sure."

"Certainly I will, little Cousin, for I want you to be radiant and irresistible this evening," he said gaily; "and make a conquest of a certain fellow I know, if no one else. I'm sure he admires you immensely, and you've nothing to do but to bring him to your feet. He is one of the best fellows I know, and a decided catch."

"Well, that's a new role for you to appear in," said Agnes, laughing with a little sigh of resignation as she rose to follow her mother; "I never knew you to play the part of a matchmaker before. I confess I haven't the most remote idea to whom you allude, and neither am I going to ask you. But I'll leave you now to the blissful enjoyment of your own reflections. Bye-bye," she gave him one of her brightest smiles and left him alone.

As soon as Mrs. Glenwood and Agnes quitted the room Carl took up the book, Howell's "April

Hopes," which Agnes had been reading aloud, and taking the seat she had just vacated near the window began to read where she had left off. He was soon so interested in its pages that he did not hear the soft step that crossed the room, and not until he felt the weight of a light hand upon his shoulder did he suddenly look up.

"Little Mother! is it you?" he said, looking at her fondly, while he rose and placed an easy lounging chair for her near his own.

"Where is Agnes?" she asked, looking round. "I thought she was in here with you?"

"So she was until a few minutes ago, when Cousin Ella came to consult her about her dress for this evening, and after the all important question was arranged, she went off to her room for a nap."

"Who is going with her to Mrs. Gordon's this evening?"

"Mr. Bland. It seems that she had half a dozen offers, but Mr. Bland being the first, he is the successful aspirant for that honor."

"And you?" his mother looked at him with a gentle smile.

"I am going with Miss Nina Ashton. She is visiting at Col. Glover's, and will be in the city several weeks. I'm sorry you are not going, Mother," he said tenderly.

"Yes, but I do not feel strong enough, and one is not expected to sacrifice health to social duties. I had a note from Ruth this afternoon," she went on, "and she wished me to look in the library for a book—I don't remember the name—that she left on the table. I wish you would get it for me, dear. Here is Ruth's note, and you can see the name of the book and bring it to me."

He took the note and read it, and left the room at once to do her bidding. In a few minutes he returned with the book she wanted.

Mrs. Grayson was standing by the table bending over a rose-jar which held a large bouquet of lovely flowers.

"Where did these come from, Carl? They are very beautiful. Some of them I do not recognize."

"Mr. Bland sent those to Agnes, Mother dear. Yes, they are very fine. Here is 'The Window in Thrums,' and Ruth's note," he said, handing them to her. "So unnatural in a girl like Ruth," he said, "with her rare beauty and accomplishments not to care for society and such things. Of all beautiful, graceful and attractive women I know, she hasn't a peer. I regret that she is not going to Mrs. Gordon's this evening."

Mrs. Grayson looked keenly and anxiously at his handsome face for a moment, and a low sigh escaped her.

"After Ruth is graduated," she said calmly, "she will, of course, go more into society. Just now she hasn't the time if she had the inclination. Heretofore, during her vacations, she has declined to attend social gatherings on account of being in mourning, but now since she has laid it aside, and when she has finished her studies at the Academy, it will be different—though I believe she will always be a student and care very little for a gay and fashionable life."

Then she turned to him and laid her hand affectionately upon his arm, and looked up tenderly into his face. She hesitated, because what she had to say must be said though it cost her a great effort to say it, and she shrank so from wounding him.

"Carl, my dear, brave boy," she said, gently, "be as affectionate and kind to Ruth as you will—regard her as a dear friend, a cousin, even as a sister if you may; but do not, let me ask you, fall in love with her. You know what I mean—you know why I ask you this—you know it is because I would spare you future disappointment and pain. While Ruth is the one woman I should have wished most to see your wife, and I love her as a daughter, yet she has no heart to give you—no such love as you would ask to make you happy. I know that you are too honorable and too noble to think of trying to win her love under the circumstances, but I simply ask you to repress in the outset all feelings of a warmer nature than mere friendship, if you would hope to retain your present peace and tranquility of mind. I have taken this opportunity to talk to you, Carl, because your happiness and welfare are very dear to me, and so are Ruth's—and your uncle's too," and then her voice grew softer; "I should like you to know—to have the assurance of my ready sympathy and confidence, now, as much as if you were still a boy, and feel that you may talk with me at all times freely and unreservedly, and as your heart prompts you."

Carl's face flushed, but he smiled and said earnestly, "Depend upon it, Mother, I shall love Ruth wisely, but not too well for my own peace of mind; and instead of loving her as you suggest, it seems I must learn to love her as an aunt. No, so far as I can see and know my own heart, little Mother, there is no need for your apprehension."

Mrs. Grayson smiled at his bright, boyish

words, which she knew came from the depths of an honest heart. He bent down and kissed her, and then, without another word, she left the room; while he, still thinking of what she had said to him, resumed his book and tried to fix his attention upon its pages.

Ignorance is sometimes happiness, and Carl was really ignorant of the depth of his attachment for Ruth, and so was sincere in what he had said in the interview with his mother.

But, with her quick womanly perception, she had read something more than he knew himself —something beneath the surface of his warm, impulsive nature which she feared would kindle into a passion which would cost him dear.

She knew his character well—every strong and weak point of it; and she knew, too, how best to appeal to his high and noble feelings. However, she had simply sounded a warning—she hoped there would be no need to do more.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Late one afternoon, some days after Mr. and Mrs. Glenwood had left for their home in California, Agnes sat alone on the veranda, reading.

It had been a lovely day, filled with the sweet sensuous influences of the season, and now it was dying beautifully.

Masses of purple clouds, silver-rimmed, floated across the western horizon, changing magic-like into rosy pink and pearly gray banners, shot with bars of sun-flushed gold, then trailing themselves slowly along, gradually paled and were lost in the radiant glow of the crimson sea tossing its bright waves above the leafy tree-tops, where the sun went down and slept.

In the sweet, mysterious silence of the lingering twilight, the big lilies in the marble vase near the fountain began to look like flower-ghosts, as the soft wind swayed their pure white chalices to and fro in the gloaming.

The chirp of a cricket came from the shrubbery, which was already silvered with the starlight and the pale gleam of a young moon, which hung like a severed ring on the edge of the starry vault.

Bruce was lying on the floor at Agnes' feet, his head resting on his outstretched forepaws—not asleep, but in an attitude instinct with the sense of watchfulness—expectant.

At that moment Agnes detected the faint, fragrant odor of cigar smoke, then voices and footsteps approaching.

Instantly Bruce raised his head, gave a low friendly whine, and the next moment bounded

down the steps to meet Carl and Nellie coming up the walk.

Nellie and Bruce came back with a rush, as was their habit, and Nellie, in passing, flung her arms around Agnes' neck, embraced her fervently, then bounded away again.

Meanwhile Carl had quickened his pace; a flush of pleasure lit up his countenance as he approached his cousin, and she held out her hand to him.

"I was just thinking about you," she said, drawing a chair forward for him near her own. "Sit down."

With a quick, decided gesture he threw the cigar away he had been smoking, stooped and playfully kissed the tips of her fingers, then sat down beside her.

"Well, I feel flattered," he said, "even though you may have been thinking something dreadful about me. But when did you get back? I thought you and mother were at Mrs. Grace's for tea? I had no idea of seeing you until 10 o'clock this evening."

He took up her plumed fan as he spoke, opened it and began fanning himself.

"So we were, to luncheon," she said; "but we returned half an hour ago; you didn't expect us to spend the night, did you?"

"No, not exactly," he laughed, "and I'm very glad you didn't, for I—"

"The luncheon was from two to seven o'clock," she interrupted him. "We went at four, spent an hour, and afterwards drove to the W. and S. Art League Exhibit, and then came home."

"I hope you enjoyed it," he said.

"Which—the luncheon or exhibit?"

"Both, of course."

"So I did very much. The League's exhibit was decidedly creditable. It was large and varied, and there was some exquisite work—all done by the local members, I was told. I met Miss Duval, one of the leading spirits of the organization, and she seems to manifest an enthusiastic interest in its success. She had some lovely things of her own, and some etching on linen I was particularly struck with—it was exquisitely done. How gifted she is in many ways, and charming, too, I think. Then I saw a painting there, done in oil—a landscape scene—and it reminded me very much of a similar one I saw in your friend's studio in Paris last fall."

"That lake scene Cecil painted when he was with us in Florence?" Carl asked sympathetically. "Yes, that was a good thing," he added.

"By the way," she asked, "when did you hear from Mr. Brian last? I don't know when I've thought of him before until to-day. But that picture recalled him. I did like the poor fellow notwithstanding his dreamy, peculiar ways. But I suppose all artists are peculiar in some way. Still, I liked him, you know," she stopped short and looked at him thoughtfully, while a warm color came into her face. "Yes, I do believe there is something great in him, and he'll yet be a high celebrity some day; but I can't help feeling a sort of strange pity for him."

Carl shook his head, smiling gravely.

"Hush, you mustn't say anything against my friend Cecil. He's a splendid fellow, and he has his own troubles. It wasn't your fault, I honestly believe, nor his either, that he fell in love with you; neither was it your fault that you couldn't return his love. But that little episode,

which drove everything else for the time out of his head, I know has made a great difference in his life, for he was desperately in earnest, little Cousin. He declares he will never marry, but settle down in Paris and bury himself in his art. I had a letter from him two weeks since. He was well in body, sick in mind, and hard at work."

At the end of his story Agnes sighed, and with a touch of her old impulsiveness said:

"Oh, I dare say he'll soon get well over that little affair, marry and settle down and resign himself gracefully to connubial joys and responsibilities. They all do. Why, I never knew a man to pine away and die of a broken heart; men are not so sensitively organized. They couldn't do it. See how sensibly your friend acted by going to work. There's one comfort that his disappointment didn't make him do anything rash. Yes, he's decidedly sensible, and I like him the better for it. Now tell me," she said, "what you've been up to all the afternoon? I'm all attention."

He looked at her expectant of surprise. "After dinner I drove with Uncle Ralph to Skiland, Mr. Raynor's stock farm, a mile from the city, to look at a span of thoroughbreds, and Uncle Ralph —a capital judge of horse flesh he is—was so pleased with them that he straightway bought them upon sight. The best part of it is, they are thoroughly broken in, and Mr. Raynor says that any lady can drive them with perfect safety."

"Delightful!" exclaimed Agnes, her eyes alight with excitement and pleasure. "I do hope I shall be permitted to enjoy the first ride behind them, for above all things that moves, breathes

and has its being in the animal kingdom, I do adore a beautiful horse. Do you know, I've been so struck with the large number of fine horses I've seen since I've been here—the horses I see daily, not only driving upon the boulevards, but even the dray horses—many of them are superb animals and so well groomed."

"Yes, we can boast of some as fine horse-flesh here as you'll find almost anywhere. On any private or public occasion which necessitates a demonstration, the number of fine horses seen in such a procession always provokes high compliments from the onlookers, and especially from strangers."

"What is the color of Cousin Ralph's new horses? I'm almost as impatient to get a peep at them as I'm sure Nellie will be; and when will they be home?"

"They are black, and glossy as satin, and they'll be here this evening. I'm expecting Virgil with them any time now. They are perfect beauties, I can tell you."

"Well, you surely didn't spend the whole afternoon looking at a pair of horses?" said Agnes dubiously, "even if they are beauties."

"Oh, no. After the purchase, Uncle Ralph and I returned home, and Nell put after me at once to take her out to the base-ball grounds to see the games; that over, we took in a game of lawn tennis; and afterwards, not allowing me the responsibility of choice, she dragged me to the ice-cream restaurant, and that disposed of, she was easily enough induced to come home—so here I am."

Agnes laughed merrily. "You had an interesting experience, certainly; but no doubt Nellie

enjoyed it, if you didn't—especially the visit to the ice-cream restaurant."

The next morning Agnes and Carl drove to the West End Graded School; but they did not drive the mettlesome black, but Beppo, to the pony phaeton.

On one side of the beautiful campus a crowd of boys were playing foot-ball, and every now and again a merry shout went up at each brilliant point in the game. The girls were on the opposite side, engaged in various kinds of amusements.

The bell rang just as Carl and Agnes mounted the steps, announcing that recess was over.

"What a pity to spoil their sport," said Agnes. "I wish we'd come a little sooner. Now we'll not see Nell."

"Yes, we can see her in the hall when the pupils march in," said Carl, the shouts of the victorious team almost drowning his voice. "There goes the drum, 'beating them in,' as Nell says. Let us hurry so as to get a good position and be out of the way. I see there are several other visitors."

"Lead on," she said, and they entered together and joined the group of visitors standing in the broad hall and waiting for the pupils to file in. Agnes delightedly enjoyed the next few minutes.

The different grades, with their respective teachers, filed in as beautifully and orderly as a troop of well-trained soldiers, keeping perfect time to the drum beat, the very lowest grade leading, then going up in the regular order of their grading, turning right and left to their respective departments, the lower grades on the first

floor, and the higher ones ascending the stairway on either side, to their rooms on the second floor.

Nellie threw Agnes and Carl a meaning glance and smile as she passed, then marched on, bearing her little self proudly. Agnes and Carl exchanged glances, and Carl said to her:

"Nell thinks she's about the most important factor in the school, and no running it without her."

After the last pupil had disappeared, and all noises ceased, Agnes and Carl turned to leave the hall, when Professor Blake, who had been standing on the opposite side, approached them. He had recognized them when they entered and bowed to them.

"Are you enjoying yourself, Miss Glenwood?" stopping in front of her, and offering his hand.

"Very much. Your pupils did beautifully—and such perfect order. How many are there?"

"About five hundred in this school, and three hundred in the other white graded school in the northern part of the city. There is also a very prosperous colored graded school in the same section, and if you are taking in some of our city schools to-day, I should be pleased for you to visit this one, too. They have a good building, a corps of excellent teachers, and Professor Adams will take great pleasure in having you shown through the different departments. One very entertaining feature of that school is the music, and the singing of the pupils is a treat. Now, in the white graded school in that section, where there is also an able corps of instructors, you will find the same work in all the departments as there is in this, and in each grade there is daily some attractive feature to arouse the interest of the pupils."

"I shall be glad to visit them both, and shall do so some time; but to-day we are making a special visit to your school—" she paused and looked up at him questioningly; "but I suppose all the graded schools in the city are under your charge—in other words, you are Superintendent of them?"

"Yes. Now, are there any special grades in this school you wish to visit, or will you see them all?"

"Which room is Nellie in, Professor Blake?" asked Carl; then turning to Agnes—"You know you promised Nell you'd call on her to-day."

"She is in the primary department," he said, "here to the left. I will walk with you to the door, and Mrs. Langdon will show you what her 'little men and women' can do. I think you will find much to interest you in here, also in the other rooms." He opened the door just then, and as soon as Mrs. Langdon invited Carl and Agnes to seats, near the rostrum, Professor Blake turned away.

More than an hour afterwards they were returning through the hall, and just then Professor Blake stepped out of his office a little ahead of them.

"Well, we've taken in everything," said Agnes, in her bright, ardent way; "up-stairs and down-stairs, and I assure you I think the pupils not only reflect great credit upon their own capabilities, but the ability of their instructors. I've been most pleasantly entertained. Carl declares that I am infected with some of the enthusiasm of your teachers, and he shouldn't wonder if I were to make application to you for a position of duty. We are going now, and I'm glad I saw

you before leaving to express my thanks and pleasure." She held out her hand.

Professor Blake's face beamed. "Thank you, Miss Glenwood. You must know that it is infinitely gratifying to me to hear you speak so favorably of our work. Have you been in the library?" he asked, stepping back a pace or two and placing his hand on the lock of the office door. "You can come through this way, and I shall be pleased to show you."

She looked at Carl. "Shall we go?"

"Oh, certainly; I am entirely yours to command to-day."

"We have a class in stenography and typewriting taught here in the afternoons," said Professor Blake, as they entered the library, and Agnes walked at once to the shelves and began looking up and down and reading the titles on the backs of some of the books; "but in the mornings the room is opened to visitors."

"So you teach your pupils something outside their regular text-books—trades and professions," she said, turning round with a volume of Ruskin's "Modern Painters" in her hand, which she had drawn out from amongst a number of that author's works.

"We endeavor to give all a good practical education," he said; "but those who wish to study any particular profession or trade, then of course they are required to study, first, all about it—that is, the subjects which lead up to and are fundamental to it. You know the day when professions or employments of any kind were just taken up by mere observation, or say desultory application, has long since passed away. In these modern days, business, education, the arts and

trades of every kind, have grown so broad, comprehensive and complicated, that all these things now demand careful, scientific study on the part of those who adopt them. If one knew everything even helpful for him to know in his calling nowadays, his range of information would include a very wide circumference of knowledge indeed. But it is quite impossible for a student of a profession to grasp and assimilate everything; so he is obliged to omit that which is least essential, and concentrate his attention upon things most directly suited to his purpose. To do this, he must pursue a selective course, and not waste valuable time on studies that have become antiquated, and that this progressive age has outgrown. There is so much merely speculative and theoretical writing, too, which has to be avoided, and here again the best judgment is required to have the student employ good material, and that best suited to his individual need."

Agnes had stood listening to him with bright eyes, and an expression which said plainly enough that she fully acquiesced in all he was saying. When he stopped she turned to Carl with a touch of her old enthusiasm.

"More's the pity, Carl, that you didn't know for sure, way back, when you were a mere boy, that you intended to become a physician, so you might have taken into consideration the scientific character of the preparation which would be necessary for you to make a success."

"Well, I have studied, as Professor Blake says, some of the essential things that lead up to it—such sciences as physics, physiology, chemistry, botany, mathematics, mineralogy and the languages," he said, "so I think I am familiar with

a little more than the merely technique of my intended profession; and later on at the Medical College which I shall attend, of course I shall apply myself to those sciences which are related to medicine, and which contribute to it."

"Yes, physical culture, hygiene, psychology, economics, pharmacy, and other great subjects to which medicine is tributary," suggested Professor Blake, reflectively.

"Dear knows what a wide range of study one has to travel over and master nowadays before he can hope to make a success of anything," said Agnes, returning "Modern Painters" to its place on the shelf. "It seems that one knows but little now, even if his knowledge be encyclopedic. Indeed, when I look around me, and see how much there is yet to learn, I feel that I know absolutely nothing at all."

"When one has reached that stage, Miss Glenwood," said Professor Blake, smiling, "he is not only in a fair way to enlarge his present range of information, but perhaps add something new to the fund of knowledge he already possesses, by cultivating a habit of thorough and original investigation. But if one hopes to keep abreast in this day he must necessarily accustom himself to grasp—and do it readily, that which will cause his mental faculties to grow and expand, that which is progressive and of chief importance to the world in which he moves—and to which world he is expected to contribute something, if not for its betterment, then for its enjoyment, otherwise he will be left far behind in the race as a 'nullity,' and overshadowed."

A changed look instantly swept over Agnes'

sensitive, impressionable face, and seeing which Carl said, laughingly:

"Well, the world—your friendly world—will never leave you behind as a 'nullity,' Agnes, even though you add nothing more to your present store of knowledge; for your contribution, in the way of bright sunshine, amply compensates for any lack of mental equipment over which you may grieve."

"Ah, well, never mind," she said, brightening; "we'll not argue the matter;" then turning to Professor Blake, she diverged immediately into other topics, talking joyously and brightly, till the noon bell rang and the drum began to beat.

Agnes started, and a second time held out her hand to Professor Blake with a charming manner.

"I beg your pardon for encroaching so upon your time. Can it be so late as that? How pleasantly and rapidly the time has slipped by. Do let me thank you again for the pleasure you have given me. I have enjoyed everything immensely. It was very good of you; good-bye."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

One afternoon, Mrs. Grayson, entering the sitting-room, came upon Agnes sitting at the piano, absently running her fingers over the keys, and dreamingly gazing out before her.

Mrs. Grayson walked up to her and stood beside her, resting her hand upon her shoulder.

"All alone, I see; but I hope you are not lonely. I'm so glad that Ruth will be with you soon, my dear. I saw her only a few minutes this afternoon at the Academy. She was very busy preparing for the concert this evening. I took Nellie with me, and it was almost as much as I could do to get her home. I believe Ruth is almost sorry that this is her last term there, and would invent some excuse to return if she could. She asked many questions about you, sent a great deal of love, and said you must allow nothing to prevent you attending the concert this evening."

Agnes turned round, took Mrs. Grayson's hand and held it, caressing it softly.

"Oh, indeed I'm going, and you don't know how glad I am, Cousin Helen, that Ruth's coming home. Not that I'm lonely at all; oh, no, no—how could I get lonely here with you?" she asked with a bright smile, and a faint touch of reproach in her tone.

At the Moravian church adjoining the Academy, where the commencement exercises were held, as soon as the doors were thrown open a tide of humanity began to pour in through the front, back and side entrance ways, and at 7.45 o'clock, the hour for the opening of the exer-

cises, there was standing room only; but all of this that was available was soon occupied, and many took advantage of the open windows.

Hundreds of white-robed, happy girls looked down from the tiers of seats on the temporary platform, which extended very nearly to the centre of the church, leaving a space which seemed pitifully small for the immense audience so eager to be accommodated.

The Grayson party were in time to secure the seats reserved for them near the platform, and as soon as they were seated Agnes glanced round on the brilliant scene. The auditorium was packed from main floor to galleries, with an audience representing the culture and fashion of the two cities on this opening night of the commencement; and it was an assemblage of people who were discriminating in their applause, as well as keen to recognize the good points of the performance.

Under the glow of the electric light, the waving fans, the beautiful costumes of the ladies, the flashing jewels, the exquisite decorations, all made up a scene at once dazzling and beautiful. Although the room was uncomfortably crowded, the best of order prevailed.

Agnes was a passionate lover of music, yet to-night her thoughts were so much occupied with Ruth, that for once in her life she was almost deaf to the sweet strains of melody which floated over the packed house. Somehow she had a feeling of mingled hope and anxiety, a sort of vague dread for Ruth, which feeling, however, Mrs. Grayson did not share.

"What if Ruth should fail?" Agnes said to herself over and over again. "Oh, it would be

terrible." She looked toward her and began studying every feature of the sweet face. She seemed perfectly calm and self-possessed, and Agnes thought she had never seen her more beautiful. She turned to say something to Mrs. Grayson, and, at that moment there was a surging movement and ripple of excitement all over the house, and when she looked quickly back to the stage, Ruth was standing in full view of the audience, near the footlights, and as still as a statue. The sheet of music she held in her hand scarcely moved. "How lovely! How beautiful!" were the whispered compliments which Mrs. Grayson and Agnes heard on all sides. But Ruth seemed perfectly unconscious of the admiring, wondering glances bent upon her by that sea of upturned, eager faces.

She wore no jewels, nor did she need any, for her peerless beauty needed no enhancement. Her dress was an exquisite combination of some fleecy white and heliotrope material, trimmed in gleaming lace and ribbon, which set off to perfection her marvelous beauty and graceful figure.

Amidst the enthusiastic stir and rustle which her appearance excited, Miss Trenton, her teacher, took her seat at the piano, and struck the first chords of the accompaniment—then paused.

Ruth still looked on in silence; the glittering throng before her seemed to fade into nothingness, and for one brief moment she swayed like a tender flower shaken in a stormy blast. The next few minutes the stillness was almost painful. Agnes laid her hand impulsively upon Mrs. Grayson's, pressing it hard, and whispered under her breath, "Oh, Cousin Helen, I almost

knew she'd fail. I'd give anything to save her the humiliation I know she must suffer."

Mrs. Grayson did not answer, nor take her eyes from the lovely face upon which the gaze of hundreds were riveted. She had never thought that Ruth would fail, and she would not suffer herself to think so now.

At that moment Ruth raised her beautiful, wistful eyes, as though by some mysterious power, and looked out over the vast audience—then seemed to hold her breath; but the next moment, as if by magic, a rosy bloom flushed into her lovely face, her eyes sparkled, her face beamed, and everything else was forgotten.

Suddenly a rich voice burst upon them—a melody so sweet, so exquisite that it rose and fell like sunlit waves upon a summer sea, thrilling every fiber of one's being with a sense of tenderest, sweetest harmony, and holding them in a spell of rapture. Indeed, the magnificent, soul-stirring strains rippled through the house with an effect that was almost sublime, and for the moment the singer was lost sight of in the glorious melody of her matchless voice.

Her interpretation was a revelation to her enraptured listeners, for she seemed to appeal to them through an inner sense—that indescribable something which every artist must have if he would compel others to feel what he himself feels, and draw them to him. It was no wonder that the audience appreciated her wonderful artistic triumph; no wonder they accorded her the greatest possible demonstration of their unqualified approval. Never was the meed of praise laid at one's feet more graciously and willingly, never was it more heartfelt and sincere, even in this critical city.

When the last delicious note of the "Nightingale's Trill" had ceased and Ruth took her seat, the audience seemed in an ecstacy of delight, and the applause was deafening. Again, and still again she was called for—called to come back before the footlights; and, when at last she rose with a grace born of her own charming nature, and once more faced the audience, the house became hushed and breathless, and all seemed suddenly imbued with a spirit of expectancy. But, looking pleased and happy as a child, she simply made a graceful salutation, then smiling and bowing her thanks right and left, resumed her seat, while another storm of applause, even more deafening than the first, burst forth, and did not cease until Principal Cordell rose, and at her request asked to be excused. But the capture was complete.

It was evident that Ruth was deeply affected by this demonstration of the audience—this tribute paid to her splendid genius, and in this hour of her triumph, while the plaudits of the people were ringing in her ears, she could not still her heart, beating its tumultuous song of joy. Ah, there are so few who can withstand the pressure of public applause—that incentive, whose force can be judged only by those who have experienced it. But there was little danger that Ruth would be spoiled by this generous tribute paid to her genius, a genius which she appreciated as a heaven-born gift, to be used for a noble purpose, and consecrated to the service of the Great Giver who bestowed it.

Before the echo of applause had quite died away, Agnes turned to Carl, her sweet face glowing.

"Oh, isn't she superb, glorious. I could not have wished her to have done better; and who would have thought it of sensitive, shrinking Ruth Arnold. I long to get to her and congratulate her—embrace her. Cousin Helen, don't you feel proud of Ruth to-night?" she went on, enthusiastically, turning to Mrs. Grayson.

But Mrs. Grayson could only smile and bow; she could not trust her voice, for her emotion almost overpowered her. Then Agnes' eyes traveled back to Ruth, and she saw that the beautiful singer was looking—not at them, but beyond them, across the sea of faces, as though some strange, subtle force claimed and compelled her gaze. For a full minute her eyes were fixed upon one spot, in a remote part of the room, while her face shone with a beautiful light; and, all of a sudden it came to Agnes, why, and for whose sake Ruth had sung her very soul out, as it were, in a tide of melody beyond all praise, and thrown the spell of her wonderful power over that vast audience. She knew now why that sudden start and inspiration when she had made sure she would fail—knew now why she had sung so divinely, and as she had never heard her sing before. She turned and looked at Carl, and as their eyes met, involuntarily they both smiled, and he plainly read in her expressive face what her lips would have uttered but for the time and place.

The commencement week was a succession of bright days, each one more beautiful and fuller of attraction than the last. There was, however, a feeling of genuine disappointment among the large audience Saturday evening when it became known that Miss Shelburne would not appear in

one of her artistic impersonations; but the general excellence of her class, and the announcement that she would appear on several other occasions during the commencement exercises, somewhat reconciled the audience to their disappointment that evening.

On Sunday morning the preliminary services were conducted by the pastor and Bishop of the Moravian church, and the music was unusually fine.

The Orchestra and part of the Philharmonic Society, assisted the regular church choir, and was directed by Professor Schumaun. "The Haydn's are Telling," a chorus from Haydn's Oratoria, "The Creation," was rendered with beautiful effect. Then Miss Maitland, the teacher of vocal music in the Academy, sang at this morning service, "Forever with the Lord," and her strong voice, rich in melody, filled the beautiful auditorium.

After the opening service, Principal Cordell rose and introduced Rev. Dr. M——, of Virginia, who preached the Baccalaurate Sermon from Proverbs xxxi. 30, "Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman that feareth the Lord shall be praised."

The minister was yet a young man, of handsome appearance and gentle and persuasive in his manner. His sermon was more in the style of confidential advice to the young ladies, but was rich in thought and exquisitely clothed in classic language. He was eloquent without attempting oratory, and a more beautiful and appropriate baccalaureate sermon was never heard within the walls of that ancient Moravian church. His impressive words crystallized themselves in

the memory of his hearers, and from the beginning of the sermon until his closing sentence, the large audience was held spell-bound.

Agnes and Carl sat in the gallery that morning; and as they listened to the minister's impressive discourse, and looked down on the sweet girl graduates in their pretty costumes, on the platform, they could not help thinking how appropriate and well-chosen were the speaker's words; and Agnes knew that much he said was especially applicable to Ruth, for, in addition to being young and beautiful, she had the sweet dignity and grace of a pure and lovely Christian character.

That evening Agnes returned with the Graysons to the evening service, which was a very beautiful one, and she particularly enjoyed the excellent music, and exquisite rendering by the choir of "Unfold ye Portals Everlasting," from Gounod's Redemption. The service was conducted by the beloved Moravian Bishop.

When the doxology and benediction were concluded, and the congregation turned to quit the church, the Graysons waited a few minutes to speak with Ruth, who, as soon as she saw them approaching, came to the front of the platform to meet them. There was an indefinable expression of peace and calm repose on her lovely face, and her splendid eyes shone with a radiance that was almost unearthly.

After Dr. Leslie and Mrs. Grayson had greeted her, Agnes said, smiling up into her face, "We'll not detain you long, darling; for I'm sure you are tired, but we merely want to speak to your just for the pleasure of it; and then I wanted to tell you," lowering her voice, "that I'm entirely

disabused of some erroneous impressions with regard to your commencement. I had fancied that I should be bored to death; you know commencements, as a rule, are so wearisome; but, so far, I'm most agreeably surprised—delighted with all I've seen and heard. I assure you I'm not coming through any sense of duty, or affecting an interest I do not feel, but simply because it is a genuine refreshment to come, and I enjoy it. Now, I'm going to say good-night; don't talk; save your voice—" she put up her hand with a protesting gesture, then throwing her a kiss from the tips of her fingers with a charming grace, she slipped her hand through Carl's arm as he came up at that moment, and moved away, compelling him to accompany her, while Dr. Leslie and Mrs. Grayson waited to bid Ruth good-night, and then turned and followed Agnes and Carl down the aisle and out of the church.

The center of attraction on Tuesday afternoon was the art and industrial exhibit in the Academy chapel. The doors were thrown open at two o'clock, and from then until five the chapel was thronged with friends of the institution. Reunion of old friends, young ladies breathing the air of freedom once more, meeting of old associates, fathers, mothers and other relatives, were some of the scenes and events that made the afternoon memorable to many who assembled there, and all meeting together with that delightful informality which made the occasion such an enjoyable one. The exhibit was really an attraction worth making an effort to see. Painting pictures in water-colors and oil, crayon-work, dainty bits of embroidery, elegant house decorative work, specimens of bookkeeping and

stenography; and on a table, apart from other exhibits, were tempting morsels of food prepared by the school-girls; on another the exhibit from the sewing and dressmaking department, showing that the value of practical education was appreciated, and in this, as all other respects, the famous old institution was bravely keeping abreast with the progressive era.

Indeed, the specimens of work from every department, including specimens of statuary and sculpture as well, were all most artistically arranged about the room, amid a profusion of flowers, palms and evergreens, and the beautiful display evidenced the fact that the more elegant accomplishments were not taught to the neglect of the practical side of the institution, which was as finely displayed, and elicited much favorable comment from the visitors.

There was also a class reunion on this day. When the class of '89, composed of twenty-four young ladies, parted company at the Academy, there was an understanding that they should meet in reunion at this present commencement. Of the twenty-four, thirteen of the number assembled in one of the class rooms and held their happy meeting. Six of the Southern States were represented at this reunion—from the Lone Star State on the Gulf, to the Old Dominion touching the bright waters of the Chesapeake.

The president appointed at this meeting, decided to hold their next reunion during the commencement of '99. After the business meeting, Bishop R—— and Principal Cordell and two press representatives joined the class in partaking of refreshments. Then, in a few appropriate remarks, Principal Cordell congratulated the class

upon their happy reunion, and said he believed it would mark a new era in the history of the Alumnæ work.

Bishop R. followed and expressed his pleasure at the interest the young ladies were taking in the school, and hoped that they would all return to the next meeting.

After this, the president declared the reunion at an end, thus closing one of the pleasantest events of commencements, at least to a small circle.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The evening was charming and the wind fresh, just breeze enough to make it delightful.

Mrs. Grayson and Carl were standing on the veranda waiting for Agnes, who for some reason had put off making her toilet until the last moment. Presently Dr. Leslie made his opportune appearance, and the next moment Agnes' merry voice sounded down the broad stairway, asking Julia for her Cousin Helen.

As she came out on the veranda, Carl turned round to make some playful remark as usual about detaining them, but as soon as he caught sight of her, he paused, whistled softly to himself, then went forward to meet her, holding out his hand.

"Pray tell me, fair Cousin mine, where you intend holding court this evening?" he asked gayly, surveying her from head to foot. "You are positively radiant in that bewitching costume—a picture fit for an artist. If I were heartwhole and fancy free, I do not know but I should bow a willing captive at your shrine myself."

"Keep your compliments and declarations of love for some silly miss, who has more faith in their sincerity than I have," she said, laughing. "However, I'll allow you to admire my costume as you take us to the carriage."

The dress she wore was a perfectly delicious shell-pink—a color to make one dream of the ethereal clouds and the dawn—of rich, sheeny satin, made severely plain in the front, with a baby bodice and wide sash of the same material

as the dress, and trimmed in filmy lace. Her opera cloak, which was thrown carelessly half around her snowy shoulders, was of rich white silk, exquisitely embroidered on the border in dainty sea-shell designs, and trimmed in long fringe and had a jewelled clasp.

"And so you've changed your mind again and decided to go to Mrs. Hilton's after the concert," said Dr. Leslie, smiling and glancing at the evening dress.

"Oh, I intended going all along," she answered, as he handed her into the carriage. "I dare say it will be a very pleasant affair," then, laughing pleasantly, she said:

"I verily believe, Cousin Ralph, you think I'm as fickle as the wind."

"No, indeed; I entertain no such opinion of you, my dear," he said; "neither do I endorse the saying as applied to your sex in general. But, it is not what people think we are, whether good, bad or indifferent, but what we really are that is all-important. They may misunderstand and criticise, they may flatter and overrate us; but opinion is one thing and truth is another, you know."

"Yes, yes; I see the force of your reasoning; but never mind, let others say what they will and act as they will, I'm sure you'll always be courteous and loyal to us," she said, placing her hand over his and giving him a look which meant more than words.

"'Because most of their faults women owe to men; and for most of your virtues we men are indebted to women,' so said a noted divine recently," he answered, smiling.

Agnes was about to reply, when Carl turned quickly and repeated to her with a teasing smile,

> "To thine own self be true.
> And it must follow as the night the day,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man."

Agnes shrugged her shoulders.

"Hush! Cousin Helen, I wish you would please call Carl to order. It will be a great kindness to me. I believe he takes a secret pleasure in victimizing me."

Mrs. Grayson smiled indulgently, and Agnes, with a reproachful glance at Carl, but the next instant, unable longer to restrain herself, burst into a merry peal of laughter, musical as the tinkle of a silver bell.

After that she was as full of prattle as a child, which she kept up almost uninterruptedly—for Nellie, of her own accord, had remained at home—until they disembarked before the Moravian church, and where, upon being ushered into the brilliantly-lighted auditorium, they found it was already filling rapidly.

"I think I should like to occupy a seat over there to the left, with the representatives of the press," said Agnes, flashing a glance in the direction, as they took their seats in front of the platform. "I fancy it is the best point of view to watch the people as they come in."

"I'll try to get you a seat up there with them," returned Carl, laughing, "if you'll agree to perform the work they do, and as well. But it is not all sight-seeing with them, and they are not having such an easy time of it as you might suppose. It's work—work. Now, do you think you'd like to undertake the job to get a little experience?"

"Yes, certainly; and I should expect my reward, too," she answered, with a bright smile. "I believe in conceding to every man, and woman, too, that which you ask for yourself—fair remuneration for his or her labor."

"Then it would be a selfish motive, or self-interest after all that prompted you, like the rest of us?" he said, still laughing.

She lifted her eyebrows, interrogatively.

"Why, of course. I don't fancy any one works just for the amusement of the thing; and I shouldn't do it either, not if I had the reputed riches of Crœsus. If the laborer is worthy of his hire, then by all means let him be paid, and to the very last farthing."

"What are you and Carl disputing about, my dear?"

"Nothing much, Cousin Helen," she said; "nothing but nonsense."

But she repeated, in substance, their conversation, then began talking about Ruth—the all-important subject of her graduating. At the same time they became conscious that some one else was discussing her, too—strangers no doubt, at least to them, for they gossiped with more freedom than discretion; and though the Graysons tried not to hear, it was impossible to avoid it without changing their seats. On account of their position they could not see the speakers without turning directly around, and this Agnes felt strongly tempted to do several times, even at the risk of sacrificing conventional restraint and propriety to gratify a pardonable curiosity.

The speakers went on with their gossip.

"She's a beauty, no question about that; and might marry a lord or prince, if the lord or

prince were only available, but, as it seems they are not, it is said she'll be tolerably sure to marry young Grayson, who is recently back from Europe, and a nephew of Dr. Leslie. Very natural to suppose so. Young Grayson is rich, has expectations, and brains enough to take care of her in the event his bank account fails or is cut short; and 'tis said he's not at all bad looking. The girls seems to like him."

"Did you ever see him?" a lisping voice—a woman's voice asked.

"Guess I never did," came the answer from the first speaker, in a man's voice, "or perhaps I should know whether his good looks were overrated."

There was a suppressed titter, and then a second female voice asked in a sneering tone, "But what about her bank account and her expectations? I imagine it's a rather one-sided affair from a financial point of view, and, perhaps, a social one, too; who knows?"

"Oh, of course the Graysons' approval and patronage will give her prestige if she's as poor as a church mouse. But her beauty and genius more than counterbalance all that young Grayson's money, with his good looks, and expectations and accomplishments thrown in," said the lisping voice, laughing softly.

"I don't know about that," replied the first speaker. "Beauty and genius, and all that sort of thing, are well enough in their way, but the glitter of gold has the strongest glamour. The world over, there is a reverence paid to the owner who shows the gleam of the yellow coin that is not shown to your 'poor church mouse.'"

"Hush, I don't believe it; I won't believe it,"

returned the lisping voice, "everybody is not mean and mercenary, because—"

"Oh, no; I didn't say they were," interrupted the first speaker, "and I wouldn't have you believe it—good and evil run along aside in this world. But take my word for it, when you've had a little more of this old world's experience, and learned a little more about human nature, you'll be pretty sure to acknowledge the truth of the assertion I've just made. I can only hope that you may be disappointed," concluded the speaker, with a slightly sarcastic emphasis.

Agnes glanced at Mrs. Grayson and Dr. Leslie, to see if they had heard; but they were talking in a low tone to one another, and seemed determined not to hear the gossip going on behind them. Then she looked at Carl whose face had reddened from annoyance and disgust she knew, though with inimitable good nature, he preserved, at all events, a surface calm and composure.

He took out his note-book and pencil and handed it to her. "Now is your opportunity to do some reportorial work if you like," he said, smiling. "Items and incidents are not lacking."

"*Noblesse oblige*," she said, with a low, silvery laugh, her whole face twinkling with fun, as she accepted the book and pencil, then wrote a few hurried lines in French, and handed it back to him. He smiled as he read the penciled lines, which he translated thus:

"Who are those people in our rear? Their criticisms, if not very flattering, are certainly eminently amusing. I wonder if it would make them very uncomfortable if they knew their poor victims were so near by and had unavoidably

overheard what was not intended for their ears. I have a fancy of letting them know of our proximity. It would serve them right, and, perhaps, teach them to be a little more careful in the future when and where to discuss their neighbor and his belongings."

After he had read it, he closed the book and returned it to his pocket, then with a smiling glance sidewise over his shoulder, said, "I'm quite sure I have not the honor of their acquaintance."

Almost at the same time Principal Cordell rose to make some remark; they turned to listen, and no one in the Graysons' seat was sorry that the evening entertainment was about to begin.

Ten days after this event Dr. Leslie, Carl and Agnes went to the State University to attend the commencement, and soon after their return, Mrs. Grayson announced her intention of going to Morehead. Dr. Leslie had professional engagements that detained him at home, but when these were discharged he would follow them for a two weeks' holiday down by the seashore.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

It was a brilliant morning in June, full of warmth and sunshine, the birds singing, the air sweet with the mingled scents of flowers, and the trees in their full summer foliage.

The Graysons were going to the seashore, and while the little party waited at the station for the train which was to convey them away, Agnes especially was as happy as the days were long, bubbling over with fun and high spirits, and chatted gayly with first one and then another of the friends who had come to bid them good-bye and wish them "*bon voyage.*" Nellie, as usual, was flitting about everywhere in a restless and impatient fashion, and every few minutes asking how long before the train would be in; while at the further end of the waiting-room Ruth stood talking to Mrs. Grayson and Dr. Leslie, and apparently so engrossed as to take no notice of what was passing around her. Presently, however, she was attracted by a voice near her, a voice which sounded strangely familiar, and which she thought she recognized; but at that moment she could not for her life recall when and where she had heard it; and turning suddenly round, from some impulse she could not repress, she found herself face to face with the last person in the world she expected to see just then—Harry Hawleigh.

With a flush of pleasure upon her face and the light of a great surprise in her eyes, she greeted him cordially; and while he was speaking to Mrs. Grayson and being introduced to her guardian, her mind traveled quickly back over the

scenes and incidents associated with their first meeting in the "Land of the Sky," two years before.

"I hope my intrusion will be forgiven," he was saying to Mrs. Grayson, "but I only came in last night and intended giving myself the pleasure of calling to-day, but casually learned through some of your friends that you are leaving the city for a holiday; yet I'm very glad to have met you even for a few minutes."

"It is certainly a very pleasant surprise, I assure you," said Mrs. Grayson, with a genial smile, "for we didn't know but that you were hundreds of miles away." She hesitated a moment, then said quietly, "I hope we will find you in the city on our return, Mr. Hawleigh."

"I should enjoy nothing better, and I think it likely, for I hope to effect an arrangement soon that will result in a fulfilment of my wishes in this direction."

"We will be glad to welcome you among us, Mr. Hawleigh," said Dr. Leslie, looking frankly into the face so bright with hope and purpose. Then turning to Ruth, Mr. Hawleigh said:

"Well, I don't fancy, Miss Arnold, that you are going to the seashore health seeking; if so, outward appearances are very deceptive."

"No, not exactly," she returned, looking up into his face with that wonderful smile he had not forgotten, "but Mrs. Grayson's health needs recuperating, and we hope very much the salt air will do her good."

"We shall expect you down very soon," were Mrs. Grayson's parting words to her brother, as he bade them good-bye. "I'm afraid you'll find it very lonely without us, and all by yourself,

too," she added, and Dr. Leslie thought the same, as he stood upon the platform at the station a minute later and watched the train glide past him; and, catching a glimpse of a sweet face at the car window—a face fairer and dearer to him than all others—he raised his hat above the heads of the moving throng and bowed gracefully.

Meanwhile, as the train on which the Graysons had departed swiftly sped on its way over the short railway line dividing the city they were leaving behind and the one to which they were hastening, Ruth scarcely spoke, but Agnes and Carl had kept up such an incessant bantering and fusilading one another, that Ruth's silence was not commented upon.

"Well here we are for an hour or more," said Carl, as they descended from the platform of the car at Greensboro, where they were to be detained for one hour, and made their way to the waiting-room.

"An hour!" ejaculated Agnes. "If there is one thing more than another that bores me to death, it is stopping over at a strange place, and waiting for a next train."

"Not if you have pleasant company?" said Carl, laughing.

"Oh, it makes no difference; the fact remains the same. We have to wait."

"But suppose we could find something to do to kill time?" he asked, smiling in a way that implied a suggestion.

Agnes looked up quickly, her eyes questioning.

"I have an idea. I was going to suggest—"; he paused and looked at his mother, smiling, and Agnes asked hurriedly:

"What? Why don't you tell me?"

"I was going to suggest that we get a conveyance and drive out to see the Guilford Battle Ground. It is about four or five miles north of the city, is reached by a first-rate road, and with a good team I think we can easily make the distance and return while we are waiting for the next train."

"Surely you are not in earnest, Carl?" interposed Mrs. Grayson. "Don't think of such a thing. I'm sure you'll not have time to go and return before the train comes in. Of course I shouldn't think of going on without you two; and to stay over until to-morrow, in the event you were left, would rather upset our present arrangements."

"Oh, I'm going, too, Mamma," cried Nellie, "if Carl and Cousin Agnes go. Where are they going?"

"That's what we didn't intend for you to know, Nell," Carl said, quietly.

"Certainly, we won't think about going, Cousin Helen, if you think best for us not to," returned Agnes, with a graceful good-nature. "Yes, it would be decidedly awkward to get left, I think myself."

"You know you can go some other time, my dear," said Mrs. Grayson, encouragingly. "You wouldn't have time to do more than drive there and back were you to go now; and if you'll wait and make a special visit to the place and spend several hours, I think you will enjoy it much more and feel repaid for doing so. Now, don't you think that is the best plan?"

"I do, indeed, Cousin Helen," said Agnes, warmly. "But tell me," she went on in an appealing tone, "what is there so attractive about

the place outside of its historic interest? Of course I know as a fact of history that this battle-ground was the site of the memorable 'Battle of Guilford Court House,' fought between the American forces under General Green and those of the British under Lord Cornwallis—on—on, oh, fie! I don't remember when. I never could remember dates."

"It was on the 15th of March, 1781, little Cousin," interrupted Carl. "I do believe you would forget the date of your wedding day."

"Yes, unquestionably," she said, shrugging her shoulders. "But that is a matter of supreme indifference to me at this moment. I am more interested in this battle-ground just now. Do keep quiet and let Cousin Helen tell me about it. If you don't wish to hear, I'll excuse you."

"Thanks, I'll accept your dismissal and go out and have a smoke," he said, rising and moving away. Nellie sprang up and followed him. Agnes looked after his retreating figure with a little amusement in her bright eyes; then turning to Mrs. Grayson, said:

"Please go on, Cousin Helen. Ruth and I are ready to listen."

"Well, I can't do more than briefly outline some of the facts," said Mrs. Grayson. "As you know, or rather as Ruth knows, since she is of course better acquainted with recent North Carolina history than you are, my dear, some years ago a stock company was formed, styled the Guilford Battle Ground Company—and this stock company is composed of some of the most prominent North Carolina gentlemen—for the benevolent purpose of preserving and adorning the grounds on and over which the Battle of Guil-

ford Court House was fought, and erect thereon monuments, tombstones and other memorials to commemorate the heroic deeds of the American patriots who participated in this battle for liberty and independence. The purchase of the land was attended with great difficulty, for some of the heirs were so scattered that it was difficult to obtain deeds from them all. Well, the company has erected a handsome cottage, in a beautiful white-ash grove, about two hundred feet from the railway and highway. The house is tastefully painted and presents a very attractive appearance. There is a keeper always present to wait on visitors and give them information.

"Somewhere on the grounds there is a beautiful polished blue marble block two feet square, with a circular basin in the centre, which forms a spring. The adornment of this spring was the generous work of Mr. W. P. Clye, of New York City, whose name it bears.

"The Leonidas Springs are close by, with their twin bowls of gushing freestone water, and so called for Mr. W. Leonidas, a retired merchant of Philadelphia.

"The quaint old sandstone monument, after the fashion of 1820, which was placed over the remains of Brigadier-General John Sumner, of Warren County, has been removed by the State to the battlefield, and under it now lies all that is left of the brave and skilled officer, who led the North Carolinians in the bloody charge at Eutaw Springs. The monument is quite attractive and easily seen from all parts of the field.

"Then there are other handsome monuments, a large pavilion and band-stand; a museum containing relics of the Revolutionary War; and

many improvements about the beautiful grounds. Of course it will have a celebrity while the history of the Revolution is remembered; but one seeing it to-day would never imagine that it was once the scene of carnage. During the summer season, it is a great resort for picnic parties and—"

"Is this the only place of note in or near the city?" interrupted Agnes, with an impatience she could not quell betraying itself through her interest.

"By no means," returned Mrs. Grayson, with emphasis. "In the first place, I would say that it is specially noted for the intelligence and culture of its people, and its many churches and fine schools. One of the oldest of these is the Greensboro Female College, a most excellent institution of learning; several fine graded schools for both white and colored; two colored high schools; and last, but by no means least, the State Normal and Industrial College, recently established, but which, by reason of its superior management in the beginning and up to the present time, has already come to the front as one of the very finest schools in the South. It has accomlishepd in results all that has been expected of it, and because of its wide-awake and progressive spirit, will reflect still greater honor upon the State. And again, Greensboro being the greatest railway centre in the State, is no doubt, destined to be one of the largest, if not the largest city in the State. It certainly contains the best elements for a great city—it has a good deal of capital, a great amount of enterprise, and even now is a very thriving, handsome place. The Southern Finishing Mills near

by and the great cotton mills at Proximity, which, by the way, is quite a little village, furnish remunerative employment for a very large number of deserving people.

"Greensboro has long been known, too, far and near, as the 'City of Flowers,' because the yards and gardens of the citizens, in the summer season, manifest a very refined and elegant taste in this respect.

"Ah, there's our train," she added, rising; "we'll have to hurry. This train only stops a few minutes, and we must get seats together if we can."

They managed to effect this arrangement by reaching the vestibule car before it was invaded by the rush of passengers from the incoming Northern train; and as soon as they were seated—Agnes beside Mrs. Grayson, with Ruth and Carl fronting them, and Nellie and Julia just in their rear—Agnes began chatting in her usual happy, gleeful way, about one of Mrs. Grayson's friends whom they had met at the station.

"How I do like Miss Goldsmith; she is so pleasant and jolly. I can't think of her as being an old maid. The very idea! What a pity she's deprived some estimable man of a good wife."

Carl threw his head back and laughed.

"Look here, Agnes, that won't begin to do. A few minutes before, to Miss Goldsmith's face, you were endorsing her for wearing the easy yoke of maidenhood, and now, presto! as soon as she's vanished, you are ready to put upon her the shackles of matrimony; oh, consistency, consistency! thou art—"

"Hush! cynic," she said, giving her head a little toss. "I wasn't talking to you, but to Cousin Helen."

"All right; but from the bottom of my heart I declare I'm not a cynic, for I assure you, my dear Cousin, I entertain no morose and contemptuous views and tenets on human nature. Your real cynic has the qualities of a surly dog; he snarles and is captious, but, positively, I'm not"; and with that he turned to Ruth and began an animated conversation with her.

The deference he always paid to Ruth was very different from that which he paid to his gay and pretty cousin.

On the very first day of his arrival home, and he had looked into the marvelously beautiful face of Ruth Arnold, a strange, sharp thrill shot through his heart—a thrill of mingled bliss and pain—bliss because he felt that she was his ideal conception of a perfect woman, just the woman he could love with the whole wealth of his ardent, generous nature; pain because he knew that she could be nothing to him, yea, less than nothing in the way he would have desired. Staying under the same roof with her, of course he was compelled to meet her constantly and at every turn; and yet, knowing his weakness, he never sought to evade any meeting with her when it came.

He laughed and talked with her, he enjoyed listening to her sweet voice, sometimes walked with her, and more than once when he looked into the wonderful depths of her dark, wistful eyes, that peculiar haunting sadness made his heart throb quicker, while it threatened to enslave him. Yet, whenever his heart beat the faster under the spell of her presence, he subdued it with a will so strong and masterful that no one—and least of all, Ruth herself—

guessed his momentary weakness. He knew what was due his uncle, due Ruth, and due himself. He would as soon have thought of handling a viper as to try to win a love which was pledged to another, and which, so far as he was concerned, he knew would only end in failure, and bring to him humiliation and the bitterness of unavailing remorse. But after all he had a human heart—a heart so human that its passionate impulses would not always yield to the dictates of his stern will.

His safest course would have been, under the circumstances, to fly from the fascinating danger while there was yet time. But he tacitly resented the bare suspicion that there was danger for him, and over and over again he would dismiss all apprehension and assure himself that in spite of everything he would wear an armor so strong that he would be proof against the wonderful charms and fascinations of even Ruth Arnold.

But as he talked to her now in his usual graceful nonchalance of tone and manner, which suggested nothing more than a sincere friendship, and looked down into her perfect face, and listened to her perfect voice, her very words seemed to set themselves to the tender vibrations of his heart. And for a moment "what might have been" was brilliantly before his yearning gaze. Oh, it is so hard for joyous youth to draw the circumference of its loves and bouyant hopes, and give up the beautiful love-dreams of life. But then—

> "Love is ever busy with his shuttle;
> Is ever weaving into life's dull warp
> Bright, gorgeous flowers, and scenes Arcadian."

Yes, it was to be renunciation, he said to himself; that renunciation with which our lives are said to begin; and he would be strong.

At Durham, Agnes turned from the car window, out of which she was gazing and asked, "Is this Raleigh, the State capital?"

"No," answered Carl. "By-the-way, I'll let you make a guess what place it is—but before you make the attempt I'll give you a clue if you'll come with me out on the rear platform of the car; won't you and mother come too, Ruth?" he asked, rising, and glancing from one to the other. "Perhaps you would like to see something I wish to show Agnes?"

"Yes, all come," said Ruth; but Mrs. Grayson excused herself, and as the three went out on the platform, Carl pointed to a large picture on a splendid brick structure which they had just passed, near the railway, and asked:

"Have you any recollection of ever seeing anything like that before, Agnes?" She looked quickly in the direction indicated, and instantly her eyes kindled with a surprise that was amusing to see.

"Why, of course—over in Europe—we saw that flaming advertisement everywhere. Can it be? And so this is Durham! Don't you remember that Englishman tauntingly asking you one day on the train, on your calling his attention to a similar sign," nodding her head toward it, "if Durham were so large as London? I do, and I remember the anwser you gave him, too—an answer that made me feel proud that we were Americans. And I suppose those other buildings over there are factories, too?" she said, waving her fan toward a number of handsome brick buildings.

"Most of them—yes." Then added, "Durham is one of the best advertised towns in the State. It is a city of great wealth and enterprise, too."

A little later, when they reached Raleigh, the conversation changed into another channel and became general.

"This is the 'City of Oaks,' Agnes," said Ruth, just as the train came to a standstill.

"And what is it famous for?" she asked, with a humorous twinkle in her eyes, glancing at Carl. "You seem to have your State's history in detail at your finger's ends." Then she turned to the window and tried to see out, but a freight car stood on the track and obstructed the view.

"For its exceedingly beautiful and lovely women, gallant men, and charming climate." Carl answered promptly, before Ruth had time to respond.

"And you should have added, its culture, and its refined hospitality," said Mrs. Grayson, "to say nothing of its conservative business enterprises. You know, my dear," she continued to Agnes, "that the city is named in honor of the most accomplished scholar and soldier of Queen Elizabeth's time, Sir Walter Raleigh, who was first to send an English Colony to the New World. The streets of the city are regularly laid out, and are shaded with such magnificent native oaks, that it is very appropriately called the 'City of Oaks.' Besides many handsome residences here, there are a number of magnificent public buildings and institutions of noble charities in full operation."

At Goldsboro, that pretty city so noted for its important industry of truck farming, there was

another change of cars. However, they were not detained here very long.

The train sped swiftly on its way, leaving the beautiful hills and valleys further and further behind, past pretty towns and villages, thundered through dark covered bridges, flew across freshly cut wheat-fields, where the yellow shocks were taking on a deeper gold in the hot rays of the meridian sun.

Agnes, who was sitting beside the window looking out, turned suddenly round as the train stopped, at that moment, and said, "Well, this must be Wilmington, isn't it?"

A curious amused look came over Carl's face. "If I didn't think you were jesting, I might be surprised," he answered, teasingly, "Wilmington, you know, or ought to know, is down on the coast, and one of the largest and most important cities in North Carolina. "This is Newbern, one of the oldest towns in the United States. It was here the seat of government was first located, and Governor Tryon built his palace, then the finest edifice of the kind on the American continent."

"No? Really?" Agnes asked, appealing to Ruth. "Remember, I can't forget that Carl is a genuine North Carolinian, and likes to magnify his State."

"Yes, indeed, it is true," Ruth answered, laughing. "You should know this much as a matter of history."

"Well, I didn't," Agnes confessed candidly. "I'm not up in your State's history as you and Carl are. And on what river is this city?" she continued, turning to the window again.

"There are two," he said, "the Neuse and the

Trent. That is the Neuse over there forming the eastern boundary, and the Trent, the southern boundary. You can see very little of the city from here. It is beautifully laid off, handsomely built and well shaded; and I can tell you something else about it. Some of the most prominent and leading men in the State can trace their origin from this city. Then, there are the great truck farms, the most famous in the South, and—"

Agnes interrupted him with a wave of her hand.

"Delightful Newbern! Happy Newbernians!" she said, gayly. "Mind you don't make me so much in love with the place I'll not want to return to the beautiful Piedmont, the home of my forefathers."

"See, there comes a steamer," said Ruth, looking in the direction of a large vessel, which was yet some distance off, puffing clouds of smoke up against the sky. "I wonder where she is from?"

"Can't tell at this distance," said Carl. "Ah, the time's up—the train is moving. I wish we could have seen that steamer come up to her dock."

"Yes, so do I," returned Agnes, then relapsed into silence.

After a time the train slowly slackened up in front of the Atlantic Hotel at Morehead. For some cause it was three-quarters of an hour behind the regular schedule time, and the long hot day was very near its close when they descended from the car and made their way toward the hotel.

The last level rays of the sun left a line of quivering gold as it fell upon the still expanse of

water which quite surrounded the hotel building, and far away upon the shadowy margin of the sound, where a shaft of sunlight struck upon the wind-heaped sand hills, gleaming among the green marshes, the undulations of drifted mounds looked like miniature mountain ranges capped with snow.

"And this is Morehead!" said Agnes, as she and Ruth and Nellie followed Carl and Mrs. Grayson to the hotel, Julia bringing up the rear. "Well, I'm glad we're here at last. I do hope we shall have supper right away, for I am tired and hungry; and as soon as I've done ample justice to the Atlantic's cuisine, I shall desert you all and go to bed. I should not think of making my initial debut here on the first evening," she said, laughing, "and not feeling thoroughly rested either. What shall you do, darling?" she asked, turning to Ruth, as they mounted the low steps leading upon the veranda.

But her answer was lost amidst the gay chatter and pleasant laughter of the guests who thronged the double veranda of the hotel, many of whom had found friends and acquaintances amongst the new arrivals, and were greeting them with gracious words of welcome. The scene presented was a most animated and picturesque one, and had the effect of frankness and cordiality and good companionship. Somewhere indoors an excellent band was playing, and the girls suddenly felt their whole musical natures respond to the well-remembered strains.

The hotel, as usual at this season of the year, was filled with guests—health, as well as pleasure seekers, hundreds of teachers from all parts of the State, and many distinguished visitors

from a distance in attendance upon the Teachers' Assembly, that splendid organization now holding its great annual convention here.

While the Grayson party waited in the large hall-way, surrounded by a merry, bustling throng constantly coming and going with jest and laughter, Carl was gone to the hotel office to get the keys to their rooms. When he returned he told them there was no need to remove their hats until after supper, but to come immediately to the dining-room where that meal was being served.

"What, just as we are?" Agnes exclaimed in amazement, throwing up her dainty hands with a slight gesture of impatience. "You don't mean it?"

"Yes, of course," he said, smiling. "If you're afraid some one will see a speck of dust on your face, then keep your veil down."

"How absurd!" she returned, pouting. "How many women have you ever seen eating with their veils drawn? All men are just alike; they can't see—." Just then a cherry voice at Carl's elbow spoke to him, and turning quickly round he fronted a medium-sized gentleman, with bright eyes and genial smile, who, after Carl had greeted, he introduced to his mother, Ruth and Agnes as Colonel Howard.

"I'm very glad to meet you, Mrs. Grayson, and hope you and the young ladies will be here during the convention. I believe you will find it exceedingly pleasant, for the house is full of very elegant and charming people."

The large ball-room, through which they passed on their way to the dining-room, was artistically decorated, the galleries were filled with hand-

somely dressed ladies, the band was playing a gay polka, while half a dozen couples, in full evening dress, whirled radiantly past them.

To Nellie, who had never witnessed anything like this before, the scene was like a great, wonderful fairy-land. It was all so lovely, so inconceivably beautiful and delightful, she thought, that she was nearly overpowered with delight. She turned and looked on for an instant, and then clung to Carl's protecting arm, her little eyes twinkling and her whole face beaming with happiness.

When the meal was over, the ladies promptly withdrew and went to their rooms, and, notwithstanding Nellie's repeated entreaties to be allowed to spend "just a little while" in the parlors, under Julia's chaperonage, Mrs. Grayson's firmness gently overruled her, she soon fell asleep, and the Graysons did not make their appearance again until the next morning.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Before the end of the first week of their sojourn at the seashore, the Graysons had become pretty well known.

A rumor had been industriously circulated, first quietly and as confidential information—though why confidential one was totally at a loss to conjecture—that they were enormously rich; and, as the rumor was repeated with zest from mouth to mouth, it not only gained credence, but the bulk of the Graysons' fortune also gained proportionally with each repetition of the story.

Certainly it could not be other than gratifying to the Graysons' what an amount of interest and attention they received, and all this, too, without arousing the least jealousy among the other guests.

They soon found themselves overwhelmed with honors in the shape of invitations to almost every variety of seaside pastimes, but chiefly for excursions to the many places of interest near by, that naturally commanded the attention of visitors. A week after their arrival at the seashore, quite a large party, made up of the guests at the Atlantic, proposed and planned an excursion to Fort Macon—that quaint old fort, now more or less ruinous, on a wave-encircled island about three miles distant from the hotel.

The boats which had been provided for the voyage, had been made snug and comfortable generally, and now waited to receive their precious freight of humanity. When it came to the question of sorting and pairing the guests for each boat, Ruth found herself allotted to Carl,

while Agnes was paired off with Mr. Darrell, one of the guests at the Atlantic, and who had been in devoted attendance upon her ever since her arrival.

"I have just been indulging in curious speculations as to whom we were to have for escorts and to which boat we are assigned," said Agnes, brightly, as Carl and Mr. Darrell come up at that moment to take them to the boat.

"We are going in the *Jessie Arthur*," said Carl, "about thirty of us, and mother is to chaperon our party. The rest have already gone aboard the *North State* and *Rattlesnake*, with their respective chaperons, Mrs. Andrews and Mrs. McDaniel."

"Well, that is delightful, that we are going in the *Jessie Arthur*," said Agnes, with a glad look of surprise. "I thought the Barrington party went over to the beach in her this afternoon. Somehow I've taken a fancy to the *Jessie Arthur*."

"Well, I'm glad that question has been settled to your satisfaction, Miss Glenwood," said Mr. Darrell, and then added something in a discreet undertone to Agnes as they walked briskly away, some gallant compliment, no doubt, for it sent a rosy flush and bright smile to her pretty face.

"I thought you were to go with Miss Rose Spencer," said Ruth, turning to Carl. "Now, I'm afraid the whole afternoon's pleasure has been spoiled for you."

"How? Why so?" he asked quickly.

"Because I fancied you preferred to go with her," she answered, candidly.

"By no means," he returned, with more em-

phasis than he intended. "I would not have had a different arrangement, I assure you. I'm sorry, however, if you are disappointed?"

Ruth looked up at him with such a lovely light in her dark, wistful eyes, that, for the moment, he felt the restraint under which he held his feelings beginning to melt away, but he struggled bravely with himself. Perhaps, after all, he was not so strong as he had thought he was.

"Oh, not at all," she said, simply, and as they reached the boat, she gave him her hand, and with a light, graceful spring, jumped upon the prow of the little craft.

Instantly half a dozen seats were offered her from members of the merry party, all laughing and talking at once in such gay confusion that she stood for several moments undecided what to do.

"It's quite certain, Miss Arnold, that you can't accept all the seats offered you," said Mr. Meredith, one of the gentlemen in the far end of the boat, "so allow me to dissuade you from accepting any of them, and compromise the matter by joining us."

"Oh, yes do—pray do!" Came a chorus of voices from the same direction.

"I suspect the truth is, Meredith, you want to exchange seats with some one else," said a voice on the opposite side of the boat.

"Not if Miss Arnold accepts my proposition," he returned promptly.

"Look here, Meredith, I should just like to know how it happens that you are not provided for, anyway," said the same gay masculine voice. "Was it a matter of choice, or an oversight on the part of the committee of arrangements, that you're left out in the cold?"

"Neither," he laughed. "But, unfortunately for me, there wasn't enough fair maidens to go round." Then waving his hand to Carl and Ruth—"A couple of seats waiting—be glad to have you"

"All right, Meredith; thanks; we'll come," said Carl, answering for Ruth and himself, and he carefully guided her across the rocking boat.

Just as it swung round in a graceful curve, and drifted out into the current, there came a slant of wind and suddenly lifted one of the gentlemen's hats from his head and bore it away, bobbing over the water. A chorus of feminine shrieks burst forth at once, while the owner uttered an expression of disgust, and despairingly watched his straw chapeau set sail over the shimmering waves, perhaps for a foreign shore.

"Well, I'll—"

"Surrender," finished Miss Spencer, with a mischievous glance at the hapless owner. "You see, Mr Vernon, I'm a mind reader, and I know just what you were going to say," she said laughingly.

The boat, which had been gliding swiftly over the foam-crested waves, with sails full set, and the blue waters swirling past her bows, now rapidly neared the coast, and in a few minutes the merry party disembarked upon the island, over which brooded a sense of loneliness and desolation.

Near by was a row of small cottages, the most pretentious of which was occupied by the colored keeper. As the visitors approached this house, he came forward and received them courteously; and after telling him what they wished, he accompanied them to the old fort.

Unlocking the heavy nail-studded door and passing through the broad archway, they found themselves in a wide passage whose walls and vaulted ceiling were dark with soot and covered with cobwebs. Then the keeper turned to the left and led them through numerous dimly-lighted apartments, in many of which the brick and mortar had fallen away, and all were elaborately draped with spider-webs. He had a bit of history to tell connected with every room through which they passed. But what most interested the visitors was the story he told about several distinguished Southern officers who were imprisoned for many months in the last two rooms which they visited, and which were situated in the rear of the fort. "These rooms had been handsomely carpeted and furnished," he said, "during their occupancy by these officers, and they were allowed to have not only the best of everything that could be procured for their physical comfort and pleasure, but were granted permission by the Federal officer in command to retain their valets to attend their wants, and while the sentinel restlessly paced his solitary beat, these favored captives ate, drank and held high carnival." This story, however, lacks confirmation, and the possibility of fiction about it is too overpowering to be literally received as an historical fact on mere hearsay, though the visitors received it from the intelligent keeper with all the show of credulity and enthusiasm he could have hoped for.

Once more out in the open air, they cautiously climbed up a steep stone stairs to the rampart, underneath which were dungeons so dark and noisome that no one seemed inquisitive enough to explore.

The golden glory of the afternoon sunshine flooded the waters. Out across the broad sea the snowy waves came rolling in, tossing the white spray high in air as they broke upon the outer reefs of the promontory.

"Isn't it grand and beautiful?" said Ruth. She had been standing perfectly silent for the last five minutes, looking out over the heaving waters to where the sea and sky lay in a level line, and where rose the tower of a lighthouse, solitary and gray.

"Yes, beautiful—very beautiful," Carl returned, without removing his eyes from the sweet face before him, and upon which he had been gazing with a look of intense admiration, instead of upon the sea.

Ruth turned to him, her face glowing with the glad sense of abounding life, but checked herself abruptly, for she saw something in Carl's face she had never seen before, something of whose meaning there could be no doubt; and involuntarily she put out her hand as if to ward off a blow. No words could have silenced so well whatever he might have longed to say as this gesture of protest from her; but his face was smiling and his voice steady as he said:

"I see the others have left us. What do you say to our exploring the old Confederate hospital?"

Ruth's eyes followed the direction of his gesturing hand.

"I don't see how we clearly can, through that tall grass."

"Oh, easy enough. There is a sheep path which you cannot see from here, and we can follow that and it will bring us directly to the old

building. It is worth your while, I think. Do you care to go?"

"Yes, I believe I do," she said, giving him her hand for him to assist her down the steps. "How dreary and desolate it looks," she continued as they wandered first through a bit of waist-high grass, then turned into a narrow sheep path which brought them to the old ruins, which, on a nearer approach, showed all the desolation of decay.

An upper and lower veranda ran around the entire building, but the dilapidated condition of the stairway prevented their ascending to the upper one, where they would have had a magnificent view of the sea. As they sauntered round the ancient edifice and peered curiously through the window frames, for many years guiltless of glass, into the low-ceiled rooms, it was easy to dream one's self back a quarter of a century and figure the sick soldier in his narrow bunk filling the room with his groans, while the silent nurse patiently administered to his needs. The very sight of these crumbling chambers imparted to the visitor the keenest sense of loss and desolation.

Ruth sighed and turned away, when suddenly, from some hidden corner of the building, came a peculiar noise which made her pause in a puzzled silence.

"What do you suppose it is?" she asked, turning to Carl

"Ghosts," he said, a twinkle of fun in his eyes, which reminded her so much of a pair of handsome eyes she was already impatient to see.

Ruth smiled. "The idea; but really I am very much perplexed." While they stood wait-

ing three—five minutes, speculating about the strange noise, suddenly there came a loud crash in the rear of the building, and the next moment a flock of startled sheep rushed helter-skelter past them down the narrow pathway which they had come, and disappeared.

Ruth gave a perceptible start, but said, smiling, "What a pity those sheep have come upon the scene and spoiled what might have been a very harmless ghost story. How Agnes would have enjoyed it."

"I don't fancy so," he returned carelessly. "Agnes frankly admits that she is an arrant coward."

They now turned and retraced their steps, and as they were passing the fort Ruth stopped a moment and with thoughtful eyes glanced about her. She was paler than usual, yet it was a pallor that enhanced the delicate purity of her complexion.

"How lovely this must be at night when the soft rays of the moon fall peacefully over these ruins—or, to put it poetically, 'when the full moon is threading this deserted court with silver sandals.' I almost regret that we cannot remain and see the place under the enchantment of moonlight."

"Have no hesitancy, I beg you, to command my services for a moonlight sail. Let me be your gondolier, Ruth," he said ardently, turning his face to her, kindling with hope, eagerness, and that something which had flashed out once before from under the genial brightness of his nature. Something in his tone, too, soft and tender and thrilling, made her turn suddenly and look at him, and again she saw that

look in his eyes which, until to-day, she had been so blind to see, so busy had her mind and heart been with a more engrossing subject. The revelation came to her with a thrill of pain instead of ecstatic joy, and for one brief moment she felt powerless to appeal against that silent, suppressed passion, which, despite all Carl's efforts, had leaped into his eyes, his tone and manner, and betrayed him.

The smile faded from her face, and a look of pained regret flitted across it.

Carl, regarding her intensely, read the thoughts that were passing in her mind as easily as those of an open book, and the next instant her sense of gravity appeared likewise to have fallen upon him. From her inner consciousness she tried to frame an answer—to say something that would not carry her seemingly beyond the bounds of kindness, but she remained silent and the speech died upon her trembling lips.

She made a movement to withdraw her captive hand from his arm, but the next moment his fingers closed upon it, and almost reverently he carried it to his lips. Then, looking into her flushed face, with a sort of protecting tenderness he bent toward her, still holding her throbbing palm, and while inwardly struggling for self-mastery, said gently:

"Ruth Arnold—Ruth, don't be afraid—trust me—I am indeed your friend—do not doubt it. It matters not how deep and strong the emotion you have awakened in my heart—and heaven knows it has been a delight amounting almost to agony—how sensibly that emotion has increased from day to day, beyond my power of control, or how vividly that flame of honest,

unequivocal admiration may burn, yet, I assure you, I would sooner perish than ask you to give me something warmer and better than your friendship—than ask you, even in the ardor of my impetuosity, to be disloyal to one of the noblest and best of men. I do not—cannot believe that I wrong him or you in making this avowal of my hopeless love; a love which, because I know it is hopeless, and have known from the very first that the end must be a requiem to me. I shall in time conquer. I believe there was sufficient occasion to call forth this confession, and I believe, too, that now I've made clear my feelings toward you, I shall be better able to resign myself to the fate which lies before me—a fate which will separate you from me, while I go out into the wide world and try to win a place for myself among men. Even if I had a right to love you, Ruth, and you did not return my love, I should not blame you; and, I had almost said, neither would I ask you to try. Do not misinterpret my meaning. It is simply because I believe that true love makes no demands and is divine. I would not marry a woman unless she loved me, and certainly I should have to be swayed by the same dominant emotion, or I'm sure I should be miserable—wretched, indeed."

He was silent a while, and in those few minutes he had formed a decision which was fixed and immutable. Ruth did not answer, but turned and looked at him, and their eyes met. The cloud had cleared from his brow, and there were indications of strength, firmness and power underlying the almost womanly sweetness of his smile which she had hardly noticed before.

"Listen to me, Ruth," he resumed warmly;

"I am by no means a self-sacrificing saint, you know, but, if it please heaven, whatever the conflict in my breast or however much I may suffer, I will prove myself worthy to sustain my family name and honor, and always be your constant and loyal friend."

Ruth felt that he would do as he had said, and she looked up at him with a smile that might have comforted the most disconsolate, while her sympathetic eyes broke through her habitual self-restraint.

"How glad I am to see you so brave and strong, Carl. Believe me, you will ever have my absolute trust and friendship, and I can't help believing that some day you will win a far better wife, who will love you and make your life happier than I ever could have done."

As they strolled on to the boat, a pleasant breeze was blowing off the shore, the waves washed with a musical hiss against the boat, the sea gleamed with snow-white flashes, and the smell of the salt air was delicious.

As the boat glided merrily over the salt water, a quartette of gentlemen began to sing in rich melodious voices a lively boat-song. In the interest of the song the ladies ceased talking and sat listening. Miss Raymond, a gay, fascinating blonde, with pretty, doll-like features, leaned forward, gracefully posing, while the baby blue eyes sparkled in responsive sympathy.

"Where did you learn that?" she asked, looking straight at Carl, as the gentlemen finished the song.

"In Venice," he said. "Do you like it?"

"Oh, very much. It recalls many pleasant memories."

"'Love teacheth music,' so says Plato," returned Carl significantly, smiling.

"Yes, and 'song brings of itself a cheerfulness that wakes the heart to joy,'" she quoted, felicitously, blushing slightly, for she thought that Carl's meaning involved a personal application.

The sun was going down in a pomp of dazzling glory, but by the time they landed on the pier at Morehead the darkened bay reflected the radiance of a full moon, making a pathway of light across the dusky waters.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

On the day following the excursion to Fort Macon, in the afternoon, Mrs. Grayson being otherwise engaged, Carl proposed that Ruth, Agnes and himself should go for a sail together.

"Yes, just we three," Agnes agreed, eagerly. "I shall be glad to vary the monotony of frivolous festivities and the crowd of faces. I find I'm living at too rapid a pace; too much activity, too much excitement—one's physical endurance must give out sometime, and mine will, I know, even before pleasures begin to grow stale, if I go on at this rate. There's Ruth, a darling, why she's always as bright and fresh as a morning rose, and positively, I don't believe she ever has an uncomfortable moment—while poor me—," sighing.

"While 'poor me' is nothing but a butterfly, with nothing to do but be happy and make others happy." Carl laughed and finished for her. "I suspect the truth is, little Cousin," he pursued, "that somebody's heart has slipped away from her keeping—most natural thing in the world, you know, and that same somebody is concealing the secret from me. Wherefore, Cousin? Why not tell me?"

They were standing on the pier together waiting for Ruth, and involuntarily Carl glanced in the direction she was to come.

"You remember your promise," he went on, "to tell me all, everything, when you'd found your hero. Pray, who is the happy knight who has wooed and won my pretty cousin from me? Won't you tell me—won't you trust me with his

name? If 'mum's' the word, honestly, I'll not tell a living soul."

Agnes did not answer, but looked him in the eyes—a look that bathed her whole face in a rose flush of happiness. He went toward her and took her hand with the familiar cousinly kindness he had grown into with her, and looked closer at her.

"And, sure enough, I am right; I thought so," he said, dropping his bantering tone. "You will tell me all about it—sometime, won't you? I am glad, little Cousin, if you have chosen wisely; and if he who has brought this new sweet meaning into your life is worthy of your love and is brave and true, I congratulate you. But if he is not what he should be, and should ever cause you a needless heartache, I would—," he stopped abruptly, and a quick look of pain flashed across his face—"No, I won't say it; there are things best left unsaid."

His expression became very grave and resolute, but he did not know that his words pained her inexpressibly, and made her suddenly feel that her whole future was a dreary blank.

She looked so lovely as she stood there in her dainty prettiness and easy grace, with the sunshine touching her golden hair, that he could not help saying:

"I did not know how much I loved you until now, pretty Cousin; but remember, it matters not who claims this little hand, I shall always be your friend; and should trouble ever come to mar your young and beautiful life, don't forget I'll do anything in the world I can to help you. I pledge you my word—."

He left the sentence unfinished, for just then

Ruth came up, and though Carl had been watching his cousin closely, he neither saw nor suspected her real feelings. Not even Ruth had a hint of the truth.

She and Carl imputed Agnes' unusually gay spirits to a very different cause altogether, than the real one.

On the way to the boat, her talk was bright and witty and her spirit of fun so inspiring that it readily communicated its contagion to them.

When they got into the boat, Agnes suggested that they row across to Beaufort.

"Mr. Darrell says it's such a quaint old place," she said; "that on account of the dampness of the air, the houses are covered with lichen and moss, which gives the town a very venerable appearance, and the streets are grass-grown and singularly silent."

"Whew!" whistled Carl, slowly, tossing the end of his cigar into the water and lighting a fresh one. "Have you never been there? You surprise me. It's a real romantic place."

"So I've heard," she answered, "but, nevertheless, I've never visited the city, even in the light of that knowledge."

"Ruth has, I know," he said, turning to her.

"Yes, several times; and I wonder, too, why it is that a town having so many charming natural advantages, has not grown into a great city. I have been told that before the war the people were very wealthy; but the loss of their property seems to be a matter of small consequence in one way at least, for the people still enjoy the amenities of refined and cultivated society."

"Yes, it is an interesting old place in many particulars," said Carl, tentatively, holding his

cigar between his fingers, and watching the dazzling white foam churn up about the prow of the boat.

As soon as they landed they walked leisurely along the street on and near the water-edge, where many departments of the market were to be seen.

Curious carts loaded with market stuff and drawn by small ponies were standing in front of the shops, while the women deftly arranged their wares of fruits, flowers, fish and vegetables.

The houses they passed had gabled roofs and dormer windows, and many had ivy and gay flowering vines trained up their fronts.

Presently they reached the cemetery, which was between and in the rear of two Protestant churches—a wild, picturesque spot with beautiful flowers, and gnarled trees of water-oaks, covered in luxuriant ivy often hanging in swaying festoons quite to the ground, and which gave an air of quaintness and romantic beauty to the place.

Here, too, nature and art were pleasantly mingled, and one could spend some quiet hours very entertainingly wandering through this ancient 'city of the dead,' reading the fading epitaphs on the monuments of those long since departed, while on others the ruthless fingerprints of time had almost obliterated the archaic inscriptions, many of which they tried in vain to decipher.

"Now, here is the monument we are looking for, the one that marks the grave of Captain Wulff," said Carl, stopping near a square, rough slab of white marble, engravened around with a trailing wreath of ivy leaves, and surmounted

by a plain, white marble cross two feet in height. On the face of the smooth tablet sunk in the slab, Agnes read aloud the following inscription:

"To
The Blessed Memory
of
Christian Wulff
Captain
In the Royal Danish Navy.
Born
In Copenhagen in Denmark,
July 31st, 1810;
Died
In Beaufort June 7, 1856.
'He is not here but risen.'"

The cemented red brick wall, which enclosed the mound, was fast crumbling away, the short marble foot-slab was tilted to one side and the monument was weather-stained and thickly covered with gray lichen.

Ruth stooped and plucked some of the lichen from the slab and gathered a few wild grasses, which grew tall and rank about the neglected spot.

"Certainly I should not like to come here alone," said Agnes, breaking the silence, "and I think we would better be going now; we've seen all there's to be seen here."

That evening a grand reception, complimentary to its guests, was given at the Atlantic Hotel.

Nellie was everywhere, and it seemed that she was in many places at once, and as many moods as places. Mrs. Grayson had several times put forth a restraining hand to detain her by her side, but the next moment she would flit away through the crowd, good-naturedly jostling some one aside, and the next instant expending a good deal of enthusiasm on an acquaintance whom she chanced unexpectedly to meet.

Ruth, watching her with amused eyes from the central gallery, presently saw her rush suddenly forward, throw her dimpled arms with an enthusiastic embrace around somebody's neck and exclaim:

"Oh, Uncle Ralph, I'm so glad to see you. I thought you were never coming. It seems such an awfully long time since I saw you. Why didn't you come sooner?"

Suddenly Ruth's pulse seemed to stand still, and the next moment she was struggling to crush down the surging emotions which almost overcame her. She saw the tall, broad-shouldered 'somebody' stoop and kiss Nellie twice on the cheek, say something to her in a caressing tone which she could not catch, and, when he lifted his head she looked upon the handsome face of her guardian. He was smiling—his usual, genial, courteous smile. Mrs. Grayson went forward and greeted him, and then Carl, who with affectionate deference laid one hand upon his shoulder and with the other shook his uncle's warmly.

"Uncle Ralph! How are you? There's no need for us to say how glad we are to see you." Dr. Leslie stood talking some moments to the group gathered around him, while his eyes glanced eagerly through the room.

It was either Ruth's fixed gaze, or Dr. Leslie's natural curiosity—for be it understood that this Eveish propensity is as strongly inherent in the mind masculine as the mind feminine—that compelled him to look up—at any rate he did, and some weight seemed to fall suddenly from him, and a softer look crept into his eyes, and for one brief moment Ruth held his tender gaze

with the lustrous shining of her own. Agnes caught the magnetic flash that passed between them, and smiled involuntarily. Then, watching the dark eyes beside her, her own still following him, as he withdrew his own gaze slowly, she mentally decided that if Ruth Arnold were not one of the happiest women in existence, it would not be the fault of Ralph Leslie.

Carl had told his uncle that Ruth and Agnes would meet him in the vestibule adjoining. Dr. Leslie was already there, standing at the foot of the stairway, one arm resting on the balustrade. Agnes was the first to reach him, and without speaking, bent forward from the step and kissed him.

"I can't tell you how glad I am to see you," she said, her face beaming with smiles.

"Thank you. I'll believe it from your welcome," he said, with a pleasant laugh, extending his hand. "You are looking remarkably well this evening, Agnes. Is it the sea air that has—," but what he intended to say, Agnes was left to conjecture, for Ruth had put out her hand, which Dr. Leslie took in a fervent clasp, and now she was listening to his warm greeting with that pretty air of shyness which lent such a charm and fascination to her whole manner, and which her guardian thought so bewitching.

Outwardly perfectly composed, yet she felt as if the very floor heaved beneath her, and she would have given anything to have escaped the ordeal of greeting her guardian in a crowd and with so many eyes fixed upon her.

"Cousin Ruth," exclaimed Nellie, suddenly, her roving eyes taking in everything, "why didn't you kiss Uncle Ralph, too? All the rest

of us did. Now, I don't believe you are a bit glad to see him." Ruth flushed crimson, while Carl, as if to cover Nellie's embarrassing question, hastily interposed:

"Mrs. Hawkins, allow me to introduce you to my cousin, Miss Glenwood—and Mr. Hawkins, Miss Glenwood. I think you've met Mr. Hawleigh, oh, where is he"—then turning to Ruth, added, "Mrs. Hawkins has been telling me about her meeting you two years ago."

Dr. Leslie and Agnes led the way to the dining-room, Carl followed next with Mrs. Hawkins—Mrs. Grayson with Mr. Hawkins, and Ruth and Mr. Hawleigh walked last of the party. No one was disposed to resent this seemingly chance pairing off, and Agnes began to chatter away in her usual gay fashion, dividing her conversation amongst first one and then another of her friends.

The scene in the dining-room, under the glow of innumerable lights, was a bright gala picture of animation and enjoyment. The haughty head-waiter, rubbing his hands and bowing, appeared in the doorway and silently conducted them to a reserved table, at the far end of the room.

The band played entrancingly all through supper, and when the meal was over and they were on their way back, they stopped a few minutes in the ball-room to arrange the time and place of their meeting to attend the Glee Concert together. It was the most natural thing in the world that Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins and Mr. Hawleigh should be included in what was popularly known at the Atlantic as the Grayson-party, and from this evening on these three new arrivals

were spoken of and identified as belonging to that particular set. While they were occupied with the arrangements for the concert, the band struck up a gay waltz. Carl gave Agnes a quick, inquiring glance, the meaning of which she seemed to comprehend at once, for she nodded and smiled responsively, and the next moment he approached her and bent before her, laughing.

"The temptation is too great, little Cousin. I know you can't resist it. Let me see your card. You have me down for the third waltz, but this will be an 'extra,' and won't count." Then bending lower, he went on sotto voice, "By the way, what have you done to yourself; you are looking splendid—positively dazzling this evening; I never saw you look so charming."

Agnes turned to him with glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes.

"I flatter myself that I always look well; am I really looking better than usual this evening?"

"To me you are—decidedly."

"Perhaps it is the effect of my toilet?"

"Hardly. I've never seen you when I didn't think you were faultlessly dressed—and never at any special occasion—when not superbly."

"Thanks. If you pay me many such compliments you'll make me insufferably vain. But—but I can't imagine why there should be such a marked difference in my appearnce this evening."

"Don't you, really, petite?" he laughed. "Well, my impression is, that it is an overflow of the elixir of the heart—joy, peace and happiness."

A yachting party had been planned for this same evening, and a quarter of an hour later Mrs. Grayson and Ruth were descending the stairs on their way to the entrance hall, where

Mrs. Grayson had asked her brother to meet them. At that moment the office clock struck half-past ten.

The rest of the party had already preceded them to the parlors, now beginning to fill rapidly with guests. But it was some ten minutes or more after Dr. Leslie and Mrs. Grayson and Ruth had gone in quest of their party before all of them could be brought together and reminded that it was time for them to be off. Mr. Hawkins good-naturedly proffered to use his powers of influence in getting the scattered party together.

Meanwhile, Ruth, in spite of her most sincere wish to avoid being marked out and made a central figure, as was so often the case when she appeared in any large gathering, soon found herself holding a sort of informal court—for almost immediately after her entry into the room, she had been surrounded by a crowd of enthusiastic admirers, and many new-comers petitioning to be introduced.

Ruth was not aware that Mrs. Grayson had approached and stood beside her until she touched her on the shoulder.

"Come, my dear, you and Mr. Hawleigh—the others are ready and waiting for us on the pier. Ah, Major Lamont, you have come back for us?" Mrs. Grayson added, as that gentleman came up. "We were just going."

Major Lamont acknowledged the information with a bend of his head, apologized for interrupting them, and then offering Mrs. Grayson his arm, proposed they join the waiting party on the pier at once. He moved off as he spoke, leaving Mr. Hawleigh and Ruth to follow.

"How lovely!" cried Ruth, enthusiastically,

as they passed out on to the pier—beyond the brilliant rooms—beyond the sound of the gay, idle life and pleasant laughter, and paused for one moment to look out over the moonlit bay and enjoy the hushed glories of the summer night. A gentle breeze rippled the waters, and shivered the shining images of those jewel-like, throbbing worlds reflected on its glittering surface.

From across the bay where Beaufort lay, here and there weird lights flashed and vanished—again, they would leap into vision, gleam with a tremulous motion, dancing like will-o'-the-wisps, and then disappear.

At the far end of the pier, where the party were going aboard the *Aurora*, came the twang, twang of a guitar, the discordant notes mingling with the gay chatter and laughter from happy hearts. "Mr. Darrell is taking his guitar along," Mr. Hawleigh said, as they hurried down the pier, "and I hope you will favor us with some music, Miss Arnold."

"I will, with pleasure. But how did you know I played the guitar?"

"Did you not tell me so, two years ago?"

"Perhaps I did," she laughed. "You certainly have a retentive memory."

The night was full of glory, and the throbbing stars paled beneath the matchless radiance of the silver orb of night, while a soft wind, playing upon the shining surface of the bay, reflected from its rippling waves a glancing glory that gleamed and flashed like burnished metal.

It did not take the little party long to disembark on their return, and once upon the pier, by the same involuntary impulse, Dr. Leslie and Ruth paused to gaze on the calm, haunting

beauty of the full moon, now in all her pomp of light, mid-heaven; and this action caused them to fall in the rear of the retreating party. Presently Ruth turned as if she would move on, when Dr. Leslie touched her hand. "Stay one moment, Ruth—there is something I wish to say to you." These last words were spoken low, but, without questioning him by word or look, she confidingly laid her hand in his, then they moved on silently and slowly in the rear of the party, which soon quitted the pier and passed into the hotel.

Pausing beside the low parapet wall on the bay side, Dr. Leslie turned to Ruth, and stood for some moments gazing at her so intently that her cheek flushed, and she wondered at his firm and collected bearing.

Suddenly his whole countenance changed, and he began to speak to her in soft and caressing tones.

They talked on and on while the night deepened and brightened, and as they turned to quit the pier, suddenly there came from across the bay the sweet sound of music, and then a fleet of boats, their sails gleaming in the limpid moonlight, steering swiftly in an exciting race toward the wharf.

"The rest of the excursionists just returning." said Dr. Leslie, glancing in the direction of the boats. "I dare say Carl and Agnes are with the party. Shall we wait for them, or do you prefer to go in?"

There was a short pause before she answered.

"Let us go in. Somehow I shrink from the jar of merry companions to-night." So saying she laid her hand upon his arm and he drew her

gently away, and walked with her through the deserted, dimly lighted ball-room, through the silent corridors, up the broad winding stairway, then halted at her door, where, when she had withdrawn her hand from his support, he took both of them, and pressing them palm to palm, held them tightly, and said, " Oh, Ruth, would to heaven I were more worthy of your love."

Perhaps the next few days were to Ruth Arnold the most supremely happy that she had ever experienced. Her face was radiant with that rare gleam of secret happiness which at times made her look almost angelic, and there was something so arch, so vivacious and so altogether charming in her flow of gayety that her guardian thought he had never seen any one half so irresistible.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The day which had been set for a party of the Atlantic's guests to visit the lighthouse, off the coast of Cape Lookout, dawned grey and threatening: but this fact did not deter more than half a dozen of the number risking the trip, which the Captain now decided to make by the bay route instead of the lumpy sea. This change of the original program brought forth a vigorous protest from some of the more venturesome ones, but an hour later, when a heavy squall struck the staunch little craft with great force, causing her to bound and reel under the blow, they readily acknowledged the wisdom of the brave Captain, who now seemed fairly endowed with instinct in finding his way out of danger. Fortunately the storm swept over as suddenly as it had come; the lurching, rolling, diving motion of the boat ceased and became more steady, and the *Jessie Arthur*, in perfect trim, went plowing proudly across the bay, and half an hour after the squall, landed her passengers in safety upon the low sandy beach, for which she had been making. Immediately the party formed into squads and couples and started for the lighthouse, a mile away, arriving at the keeper's house in straggling detachments, footsore and weary.

After resting sufficiently to make the ascent of the tower, the party now quitted the room, leaving Carl and Agnes its only occupants. Finding that Carl had remained behind to keep her company, Agnes turned to him, smiling:

"Let me insist, Carl, that you'll not stay on my account and miss the pleasure of seeing the

interior of the tower. I know how much you have looked forward to this, and, really, it will distress me very much to know that I am the cause of your being disappointed."

"Indeed you are not," he answered, with a smile of satisfaction, seating himself beside her. "I'd much rather stay here and talk to you, and try to console you for the loss of your trip," he added, with a little laugh. "But I suspect, little Cousin, that after all there is something else—some other trouble than mere physical weariness and pain annoying you. Isn't there? Be frank, and tell me. Indeed, I do wish you would allow me to share the old-time confidence, the confidence you used to repose in me, and tell me what it is that is depressing or troubling you. It might be that I can help you; be of service to you in some way."

"Oh, it is nothing at all; that is, nothing of any consequence," she answered, carelessly, resting her head with a weary sigh against the frame of the window, and looking out.

"And you are really not unhappy then, little Cousin?" he persisted, gazing steadily at her.

"Why should I be?"

"That's just what I want to find out."

"What a strange idea you've taken into your head. Am I not always happy?" she asked, with a forced laugh.

"Dear Cousin, your answer doesn't satisfy me. I wish you would confide in me and let me help you if I can."

Agnes turned her face farther from him and looked absently out the window. In spite of her affected calmness, something in her whole manner revealed her inward struggle.

"Agnes, you can't deceive me; there is something unusual the matter with you, something you do not wish me to know; I see it; I feel it, and I beg that you will—"

"Oh, don't, don't," she pleaded, without turning her head; and then she trembled, a mist came before her eyes, her pulses quickened and her brain seemed in a whirl.

"I do not comprehend you at all, Agnes," he said, in a voice subdued and very soft. "I wish I did. If it is some lover's quarrel—if you and Darrell have had some misunderstanding, or something of the kind and I can—"

Suddenly Agnes waved her hand with a gesture to stop—blushing, confused, palpitating. The long drooping lashes which shaded her glowing cheeks were raised, and he saw that her eyes were filled with tears.

"No—no—we've had no quarrel—he's nothing to me—never was—and never can be; you are mistaken in supposing so—" a sob stopped her voice.

For a moment Carl was too much astonished to speak. He passed his hand across his forehead. It was a gesture habitual with him.

"My dear little Cousin, you surprise me more and more. Don't you remember—or have you forgotten what you told me that afternoon we went over to Beaufort together—you, Ruth and myself? Or, rather, what you led me to infer, that you and Darrell were betrothed? At least I suspected that it was Darrell, because of his marked devotion to you, and your seeming preference for his society."

Agnes changed countenance, she was silent a moment, then answered frankly:

"Yes, I see now; but I hope you will believe me, nevertheless, when I tell you that I have never had an opportunity to accept or refuse an offer of marriage from Mr. Darrell until to-day—within the last hour—and that offer I have most emphatically declined. While I like and esteem Mr. Darrell as a friend—and told him so—yet I cannot reward his love as he deserves; therefore, for his sake, as well as my own, I rejected his proposal."

Carl's face had assumed a mingled expression of surprise, hope, tenderness and concern while Agnes was speaking, and when she had finished, he looked at her a moment in silence, and then said more gently, stroking the jewelled hand which rested upon the arm of the chair:

"But is it not as I surmised; is it that some other more fortunate than Darrell has won the heart of my little cousin? Is it true?"

Agnes did not speak, but shook her head, then holding one hand over her bowed face the tears dropped fast from her hidden eyes. Carl was quite overcome at the sight of his cousin's emotion—for, like all brave, manly men, his heart was as tender and sympathetic as a woman's.

"Sweet Cousin—Agnes—," he said in a gentle and low whisper, and something in the tone of his voice made her heart thrill with a sudden joy—"let me ask you again—won't you confide in me; won't you look up and listen to me? What I am going to say to you, I have no doubt will surprise you, and, perhaps, may cause you to think that I am departing from proper discretion—or, perhaps, that I am strangely inconsistent; but let me ask that should such a thought occur to you, please banish it from your mind at

once, and believe me that what I do or say, I'm prompted by none other feeling than the purest and fondest love for you. I have not dared to even hint to you what I am going to tell you now. I have not dared to confess that a mysterious influence—if I may define it—has strangely drawn me to you of late. I would not pause to analyze this strange feeling awakening in my heart toward you, because, believing you happily plighted to another, there was no need that I should solve what is now so plain to me. But, with the assurance that your heart is free from allegiance to another—that this little hand is free to give to whom you please, I feel that some great barrier which had painfully divided us has been suddenly leveled and removed, and the knowledge of this fact proclaims to me a hope as dear as life itself—it is a hope that you will approve me worthy of the hand and heart that you have just refused another."

He paused, took her hand, and looked steadily at her. But she made no answer, and he went on in the same fervent, gentle tones; "Agnes, you are dearer to me than a cousin; and now, if you can fearlessly lay this little hand in mine, and with it the dower of your priceless love, and give me the right to guide, protect and love you as my wife, I pledge you that your happiness shall ever be my fondest care. Will you give me this right—may I dare to hope—will you console me with your love, Agnes?"

He paused again, and waited for her to answer.

"Speak, dearest Cousin, and tell me if my love awakes no echo in your own heart?" Mistaking her silence, he resumed sadly:

"If you must bid me cease to hope; if you

must banish me from your presence, let me ask that you will do it gently, tenderly, Cousin mine, for remember that it is a human heart—a heart that loves you fondly you are crushing."

The next instant Agnes lifted her face, over which the varying and fitful color came and went, and the exquisite tenderness of its expression enhanced its delicate beauty.

Then with that strange mixture of pride and timidity, she smiled, and said in a voice low, clear and sweet, while she placed both hands in his:

"Carl, this is my answer—my love—my self, my all I trust to your keeping, and let the issue be what it may, I am—I shall be happy, for I have loved you long, more than any one in the wide, wide world.

"Surely that is all that I could ask, my precious Cousin," he said, "and rest assured that you shall never regret the decision of this moment—never regret the choice you have made."

"And Cousin Helen—your mother—oh, Carl what will she say?" she asked timidly, looking up into his happy face.

"Ah, my sweet and gentle mother—she loves you already, Agnes; and when I tell her all—tell her that you will be my wife and her daughter, she will take you to her heart and love and cherish you as tenderly as I do now. Never fear—you will be spared all anxiety on that score."

"But Cousin Ralph? I know he has other plans for you—at least business plans—and then he may have prejudices, you know, against—," she did not finish the sentence, but said, "Do you think he will object to our union?"

"Why, no, little Cousin. Why should he ob-

ject? He admires you, he loves you, and he is ambitious most for my happiness and honor. There is no need that I should give up any ambitious plan that he may have mapped out for my future career. No, on the conrtary, it seems to me there is all the more need now that I should carry out those plans. Don't you think so?"

Before she could answer they heard steps approaching, and Agnes' name was called by a feminine voice, which she at once recognized. Carl rose and crossed the room, then came back and stood beside his cousin's chair.

The next instant Miss Blount entered the room and dropped wearily down on the chair that Carl had just vacated.

"I'm down from the tower at last, and oh, so tired," she said, with a little pant, and fanning herself languidly with her hat.

"Yes, I think that is decidedly patent," Carl said, laughing. "Pity's there's not an elevator. Allow me to get a fan and aid you to recover yourself. Oh, here's one—just the thing—a gull's wing." Then he sat down beside her, and began fanning her furiously.

"Oh, you'll take my breath, Mr. Grayson," she protested, throwing up her hands. "Do moderate the breeze. There—thanks; how kind and considerate you are; now let me tell you where I've been and what I've seen."

"To the top of the tower, of course, and seen the ocean as a matter of fact," said Agnes, sententiously.

"Yes, that is just what I've done," she returned, emphatically, "and while I don't regret undertaking such a feat, I assure you I'll never

attempt it again. But, really, you should have gone," she went on, looking from one to the other—"both of you. The keeper was just as nice and courteous as possible, and gave us all the information about the lighthouse we desired. I'm afraid he thought we were an awfully ignorant set, for we—that is, some of us, asked him such silly questions.

"After we'd inspected the big lamp to our satisfaction, we went out on a circular balcony, which has a high railing, and from there we had a magnificent view of the ocean. Oh, I wish you could have seen it. I'll not even attempt to describe it, because I can't; but perhaps Miss Arnold may be able to do the subject justice. I left her with Mrs. Hawkins, absorbed in silent admiration of its grandeur, and pleading to be allowed just a few minutes longer to enjoy the view."

Then Miss Blount stopped and listened.

"Yes, here they come now, and perhaps they can tell you more about this wonderful tower than I have done. But I am really sorry that you didn't see the interior of it yourselves."

Turning to Agnes, she asked:

"By the way, how is your foot? Mr. Darrell told me you met with an accident on the way—stepped upon a piece of shell or something sharp and lamed yourself. I hope it is not paining you any more?"

At the mention of Mr. Darrell's name, Agnes' face flushed all over. "Thank you, it is better. It was nothing serious. See, I'm able to use it quite well again," she said, with a little laugh, which she tried to make natural, as she rose from her seat and walked slowly but firmly several

times up and down the room. Carl and Miss Blount watched her intently while she made the test, and the latter ran on in her fluent way, all unconscious that she was discussing a most embarrassing theme—to Agnes at least.

"Isn't it too bad that Mr. Darrell leaves us in the morning? It must be a very sudden decision, for he told me not longer than yesterday that he expected to spend two weeks longer at the sea-coast. I can't imagine what possessed him to change his mind so soon."

"I don't think I shall have any further trouble with my foot," Agnes interrupted, as she resumed her seat. "It doesn't pain me at all now."

Miss Blount was too deeply interested in what she was saying to notice how Agnes winced, and the color flamed up into her cheek at the mention of Mr. Darrell's name; but before she had time to resume the unwelcome subject, the party from the lighthouse, accompanied by the keeper, entered the room, and then the conversation became general and animated. A merry group surrounded the keeper, and kept him busy answering the questions they put to him. Amidst the twitter of gay voices and rippling laughter, to one looking on from a little distance, it seemed that everyone was talking at once, and no one listening.

Mrs. Hawkins had tried several times to speak to the party, to make known an important message from the Captain of the boat—but without success. At length, when she managed to make herself heard above the gay din, in a few words she explained the situation.

The Captain had told her that he apprehended another storm during the afternoon; that the

squall that morning had simply been a herald of a terrible storm pending, but if they would return to the boat at once he thought he might get them back to the city before it came on.

Immediately all were ready and eager to suit the suggestion to action with all possible speed, so taking leave of the courteous keeper, with profuse thanks for the many favors he had extended them, they hurriedly quitted the precincts of the lighthouse and made their way back to the boat.

Barely more than half of the party had been conveyed across the water to the boat, when it was discovered that several couples were missing and no one could tell whether they had left the lighthouse with the main party, or had started and were lagging on the way. This news increased the consternation of the others, while the grave expression on the Captain's face indicated great anxiety as he stood looking in the direction the delayed party must come.

"Now, isn't it too provoking for anything?" said Miss Blount, contracting her brows. "I feel just like crying."

"Oh, don't do that, Miss Maggie," said Mr. Vernon, sympathetically, "or we'll set sail and leave the laggards to their fate."

"Serve them right if we did," returned Mr. Fulton, rummaging in the locker under the seat and drawing forth a couple of sou'-westers and oil-cloth coats, one of which he handed to Miss Blount and the other to Miss Spencer. "Better put them on," he observed. "The squall's certainly coming, and we are going to catch it like fury this time. I wish there were enough of these things to go round—," dragging out an-

other sou'-wester—" but this is all. Miss Glenwood, won't you take this one ?"

" No, thanks. I'd rather take a pelting on my devoted head than wear that ridiculous thing. Why, I should look like a scarecrow in it."

" Not any more so than the rest of us," interposed Miss Spencer, laughing, and tying hers on.

" Hand it over this way, Mr. Fulton, and I'll wear it," said Mrs. Markham, holding out her hand for it. " I am not particular whether it's becoming or not, so it protects my head."

" That's right, Mrs. Markhm," said Mr. Fulton, passing the sou'-wester to her. "I fancy Miss Glenwood will wish she had accepted it before the storm is half over."

"Hush!" said Mr. Hawleigh, turning his head and assuming a listening attitude. " I thought I heard some one call."

" Vain fancy. You heard nothing but the murmur of the surf on the distant beach," responded Carl, with an incredulous smile.

Miss Spencer clasped her hands in mute submission.

" Well, we have no choice but to wait."

The Captain still stood with anxious brows, watching the clouds which every moment grew more threatening. The sun was now obscured, the air heavy, and an unnatural light pervaded it on every side. A great change had indeed taken place in the sky during the last half hour —a change often observed previous to a tremendous elemental conflict.

" Do you think we can possibly reach the city before the storm breaks ?" asked Mrs. Hawkins, nervously, eyeing the stern, calm face of the Captain.

"Hardly, I fear. Every moment is precious—every inch a mile," he replied briefly, and then turned and began to scan again with a strained, frowning look the darkening sky.

"Thank heaven, here they come at last," exclaimed Miss Spencer, as the loitering party came in sight. Instantly every eye was turned in the direction of the bare, wind-swept dune.

Mr. Vernon placed a hand on either side of his mouth and shouted:

"Push on—hurry—we are waiting—we must be off—a storm—a storm."

They must have heard, though the wind seemed to toss and muffle his voice, for the next moment the gentlemen took the ladies by the hand, and almost dragging them along, soon reached the boat quite out of breath.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourselves for detaining us as you've done?" cried Miss Blount, waving her hand to the belated party. "Here we've been waiting for you over a half hour, at the risk of our lives, too. Indeed, I shouldn't be surprised if you hadn't entered into a conspiracy of some kind to get us shipwrecked out in the bay while you four contrive some means to escape yourselves. I'll declare it is perfectly exasperating the way you've treated us."

"Hold, hold, Miss Maggie; don't club a fellow when he's down," shouted back Mr. Meredith from the shore. "We're struggling for breath just now, and can't fight."

"Darrell, we intend to sue you and Meredith for damages, should anything happen to us before we reach the city," called out Mr. Vernon, in a bantering tone. "What in the world were you all doing that you didn't come on with the rest of us?"

Mr. Meredith, who was standing beside Mr. Darrell, waiting his turn to be conveyed to the boat, thrust his hands into his coat pockets and drew them out filled with shells. Then holding them up, said very humbly:

"Let us have your sympathy and your tears —we've been *shelled.*"

"Upon my word! well, I'll be—silenced, after that," returned Mr. Vernon, hanging his head in feigned humility.

"Honestly, I believe you all have gone daft," said Carl. "Picking up shells for amusement in the very teeth of a storm, and thirty-two precious human lives at stake! Say, good people, what did you mean?"

"Oh, Mr. Grayson, don't scold and abuse us any more, if you please," pleaded Miss Carter, one of the ladies who had loitered on the way. "Miss King and I will bear all the blame. It was our fault. Mr. Darrell and Mr. Meredith tried to hurry us, but we would have some of those lovely shells on the beach. Indeed, it is not their fault at all, and you must not visit our sins upon their innocent heads."

"Bravo! bravo! Miss Carter," shouted Mr. Fulton, in his rollicking way; "I'll get you to plead for me the next time I get into a scrape."

"No, no, Miss Carter—Darrell and I are able and willing to shoulder all the blame. We'll shirk nothing—not a bit of it—no, not we," said Mr. Meredith, who had just come aboard, and was taking a seat by Miss King, who looked for all the world as if she were ready to burst into tears. Seeing her clouded face, he went on in a compassionate tone:

"Oh, pshaw, don't you mind about it, Miss

King. I think they are just trying to frighten us with the storm." But looking round and seeing the ominous signs on every side, he was not quite so sure they were shamming.

When the last passenger had been brought aboard the boat, the Captain hurriedly weighed anchor, and once more the brave little craft was scudding along at a rapid speed before the wind, the great waves hurling themselves against the bow with a tremendous splash, then whirling away with a hissing splash, leaving a long line of foaming eddies in its wake.

It was very evident that the threatening storm would overtake them before they could reach the city, or make more than two-thirds of the distance; but not one of them realized their danger.

However, the distance between them and the city seemed to diminish with a tediousness that, to their excited impatience, was simply agonizing. Conversation had gradually ceased and in feverish excitement they sat watching the rapidly approaching storm, to the exclusion of everything else. The wind veered more to the northeast and the broad, black track of the storm was extending over the water, which was fast rising.

The next moment the bow of the boat rolled heavily, lifted by a passing wave, hung for an instant poised upon its summit, and then plunged ahead with renewed speed, like a courser answering the touch of the rowel, urging him on to the goal.

The water swashed and seathed underneath the boat, and as the gale increased in power, the long boom and bulging sail made close acquaintance with the foam-crested waves, spurting

showers of salt spray over the gunwale, and then shooting it down the crouching backs of the shrieking crew.

Another anxious moment passed.

The continuous pealing of the thunder, mingled with the hideous roar of the wind, was deafening, while the heaven was almost an incessant blaze of lightning. Suddenly the storm that had been sweeping down upon them burst in all its wildest fury, and while it lasted it seemed that earth and heaven were crushing together in one wild, inextricable confusion. The rain poured down in torrents, and the sea hissed like a cauldron. Amidst the appalling uproar, the terrified passengers clung to one another, listening with bated breath to the awful dirge which seemed hurrying them on to destruction.

The mighty fury of the wind and wave threatened every moment to tear the very timbers of the little boat asunder, but bravely she yet stood the terrific convulsion of the elements and gallantly rode the waves. Not a sign of fear or flinching showed itself through the stern composure, or in the masterful glance of the Captain, and he stood at his post as calmly as though his little craft were sailing smoothly over sunlit waves.

Presently, when the storm began to moderate, far ahead through the slanting rain they could discern the gray roof of the hotel. The very sight of it revived their stunned senses and brought fresh hope; but in their eagerness to reach the shore, it seemed that the boat was merely bounding in one spot upon the waves.

As soon as the rain had ceased, the Captain, with the assistance of the male portion of the

crew, began bailing the water from the inside bottom of the boat, while the mate took the tiller, and with a steady eye and skilful hand steered through the tumbling billows of water. With every lurch and careen of the boat starboard, a tremendous wave would shoot over the gunwale and drench the helpless crew in a fresh shower-bath. But now that the worst was over, the danger passed, there came to each of them a delightful sense of relief that was positively exhilarating, and suddenly everyone seemed to find his tongue.

Having finished bailing, the Captain returned to his seat at the tiller, and relieved the mate.

Agnes, who was sitting in that end of the boat, looked up at him with a smile of undisguised admiration, and said:

"Oh, how shall we ever thank you, Captain; and you—," nodding to the mate; "but for your skill and resolution, I'm sure we all would have been lost. The very sight of your face in the midst of that terrible storm inspired us with hope and confidence, and somehow I could not help feeling that you would bring us safely through it all. When the storm was at its worst," she went on, "I looked at Ruth—my friend, Miss Arnold—and there she sat as calm and serene as if we were at home in the parlor. I do believe she really enjoyed it."

In answer to the first part of this outburst, the Captain bowed and smiled, then said in a kindly tone:

"I only did my duty; but I must say I shouldn't like to be called upon again to go through a similar experience, especially with such a precious cargo aboard."

"I should think not," she rejoined, thoughtfully—then asked, looking out over the water—"You don't think there is any danger of another squall before we reach home, do you?"

"Oh, no; we'll soon make it now—soon be safe in port."

"Miss Glenwood, Mr. Royal wants to know if you can reef a sail?" Mr. Vernon asked, raising his voice, at the same time wringing the water from his cap, and then fixing it on his head wrong-side-out.

"Why, what is the matter with Mr. Royal, he can't ask me himself?" she laughed back, her voice seeming to float away on the wind.

"He's caught cold and got the croup," he returned, with mock seriousness. "But I want to know myself—do you know how to reef a sail, tack, handle the tiller or—"

"No, I have no nautical knowledge at all," she interrupted him, brightly. "I am a landlubber, bred and born, and after this afternoon's experience, I think I am sufficiently satisfied, and hereafter shall forever detest the sea. But why do you ask?" she questioned, with smiling wonder.

"Well, I was going to suggest that you would allow me to teach you; but I don't suppose there'll be any use for me to make that proposition now?"

"No, none in the world; and even if I were to consent to receive instruction in such things, I think I should prefer to get my nautical training from a more experienced seaman than yourself," she concluded, with a meaning smile.

At that moment the Captain called out, "Look out there! Heads down!" and scarcely had they

time to duck their heads, before the long boom with a flap and a creaking groan swept over them, the boat plunged forward, and in a trice a cloud of feathery spray dashed into their faces. Then with a skilful tack the Captain ran the boat up to the dock, where they found a large crowd of anxious friends waiting with open arms to receive them, and without a moment's delay hurried them off to the hotel, each one giving his own account of the terrible experience through which he had just passed, not forgetting, however, to give the Captain and mate full credit for the heroism they had displayed.

Discussing the event again that evening at the supper table, Mrs. Hawkins said, "I'll be frank to admit that I never expected to reach home alive or see any of you again. I thought every moment that the boat would be dashed to pieces and the last one of us drowned, and if I ever prayed earnestly in my life, I certainly prayed then."

"I just thought Uncle Ralph would go crazy," burst in Nellie, "and I believe he would if you all hadn't come when you did. He and Mr. Hawkins got their spy-glasses and watched and watched; and everybody got so frightened and said they believed the boat was lost. Why, Uncle Ralph wanted some men to take him out in a boat, so he could go and look for you all; but they said no, there was no use to try, for the boat would be upset, and then all of them get drowned, so there it was. Mamma cried, and I cried, and so did ever so many ladies—but Miss Werner just walked around and kept saying she told you all not to go, and she knew you were sorry you didn't take her advice."

"How did you manage about dinner?" asked Mrs. Grayson. "We didn't know until the boat left that you had forgotten your lunch basket. Didn't you get very hungry?"

"Hungry?" repeated Carl. "I should think we did; but when the storm broke, I don't think we thought any more about our appetites; I'm sure I didn't." Then turning to Mr. Hawkins, he added, "We missed you, Charlie; but I guess you are glad now you didn't go with us."

"No, I can't say that I am," he returned. "I fully intended going, and made my arrangements to do so, but at the the last moment I found that some friends I wanted to see had arrived on the train the evening before, and as they expected to spend but one day here, I stayed behind to be with them."

"From Chapel Hill, were they?" asked Mr. Hawleigh from the foot of the table.

"Yes, one of them, and the other from Richmond—Ed. Carrington, Maud;" he said, turning to his wife, "he inquired kindly after you."

"Ah! I shall be pleased to meet him this evening. I suppose he is stopping here—at the Atlantic?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Who is that, Mrs. Hawkins?" Agnes quickly asked, stopping in the midst of a gay conversation with Mr. Hawleigh, and flashing round.

"Mr. Carrington, from Richmond, a friend of Mr. Hawkins, but—"

"Oh, please pardon me, my dear Mrs. Hawkins," she returned hastily, the color deepening in her cheek. "I was mistaken in the name, I thought—I understood Mr. Hawkins to say Bar-

rington," and then with a playful gesture of her hand, she turned again and renewed her talk with Mr. Hawleigh, now and again appealing to Dr. Leslie to settle some disputed point in the subject under discussion. Involuntarily the attention of the others was drawn to them, and at that moment they heard Dr. Leslie say:

"Agnes, I think you'll either have to retreat or cry for quarters—better, while you can do so gracefully."

"No, indeed, I'll do nothing of the kind. That would be submitting to a suspicion of cowardice, and I can never be guilty of that, you know."

"Secure a truce, then," he suggested, in a soothing tone, smiling.

"No, sir; on the contrary, I reaffirm the statement I've just made, and shall retract nothing;" then shrugging her shoulders and glancing at Mr. Hawleigh, added gayly, "I'm aware that I have a very formidable antagonist, too, but I'll not surrender.

"What's the contested question?" asked Carl, looking directly at Agnes, who met his gaze with downcast eyes. "Now, I don't propose to come in and help you fight, but may I hope you'll allow me to share some of the glory of your victory?"

Agnes laughed, and bowed to him with ironical deference. "That's cool, to say the least; but I hardly think—"

She stopped suddenly and looked round. Some one standing at the back of her chair had touched her on the shoulder, and was bending to speak to her.

"Oh, Miss Waldorf, I'm so glad to see you. Won't you join us? We are just through sup-

per and were chatting—that is, Mr. Hawleigh and I were doing most of the talking."

Miss Waldorf glanced toward him with a winning smile, while he and Carl rose at the same time and offered her a seat.

"Oh, no, no—thank you; pray don't let me disturb you. I came to see Miss Glenwood. I should be glad of a word with you," tapping her on the shoulder, "if you can spare a minute or two."

"Why, certainly; as many as you like, and I'm ready to go with you now. Ruth, I depute you to finish my contest with Mr. Hawleigh, and be sure not to yield him one iota of the ground I've gained. Cousin Helen, I take it for granted that you all will excuse me," and with that she rose and accompanied Miss Waldorf from the room

A few minutes later the others withdrew from the table, and in passing through the ball-room, Carl saw Agnes in the far end of the room, surrounded by a group of admirers, among whom was a tall, handsome stranger, with a *blasé, insouciant* air, the most devoted of them all. In spite of himself a thrill of jealousy stirred his heart as he watched the heightened color in his cousin's cheeks and the bright sparkle of her eyes; but, detaching himself from his mother and her party, who were on their way to the pier, in his easy, graceful fashion he sauntered toward his cousin, stopping to talk with first one friend and then another, who accosted him as he passed along.

The band was playing a waltz, and there were numerous couples gliding over the smoothly polished floor; but to-night, somehow, he was not

in the mood for dancing—in fact, his favorite amusement seemed suddenly to have lost all its charm for him; and as he moved along, he was just wondering why the voluptuous strains of music did not quicken his pulse and make him thrill as formerly, when a friend stopped him and drew him aside for a social chat.

Very near where they stood was a group of ladies talking merrily, and suddenly catching the name of Grayson, he turned to see who it was that was speaking to him.

Just then one of them was saying, "Oh, no, I do not know her at all, but of course one can form some sort of an opinion, and generally a pretty correct one, of the people one meets from observation. I fancy she is very haughty, exclusive, and if not purse-proud, she certainly has the air of one who enjoys her money."

The voice that responded to this unkind remark was Miss Spencer's, and it was full of polite reproach, and a dignity that rebuked the speaker.

"Indeed, you mistake her entirely, for she is not really so at all. She is genial, kind and generous to a fault, and one of the loveliest Christian characters I ever knew. I never met a lady whom I esteem and admire more. As for enjoying her money—yes, why not? Doesn't everyone who has it, have that privilege? and besides enjoying it herself, she does a world of good with it. I heard a few days since, through a friend of the Graysons—a lady who is in a position to know—that there are three young ladies —deserving girls, without means, spending several weeks here, and all through Mrs. Grayson's generosity. I am confident that she does not

care to have this fact made public, or even talked of in private, and I merely mention it now out of simple justice to her. I have no idea who the girls are that have been so fortunate as to fall into such good hands, but I'm sure it is true, for one of them told the lady who told me about it."

"Ah! I only wish one could come across more such magnanimous people nowadays," was the sneering answer from the first speaker.

Carl bit his lip and flashed an indignant look at the woman who had said such cruel things about his sweet, gentle mother. Miss Spencer was about to answer her when she chanced to turn round, and at that moment saw him, and though he was not looking in her direction, she knew by the peculiar dull-red that burned in his cheek and the quick flash of his handsome eyes, that he had overheard their conversation. She turned again to the lady with whom she had been talking and said something to her in an undertone, and he was satisfied that she had warned her of his presence, for instantly she cast a hurried and surprised glance toward him, regarding him keenly for a moment, then said in an impatient tone, still sneering:

"Why didn't you tell me that he was listening? Perhaps I might have been a little more guarded in my remarks. However, what's said can't be unsaid, and there's no need to worry over a trifle." But it was obvious that she was not a little annoyed that she had not been more discreet.

Carl had heard enough. He excused himself to his friend and made his way at once to Agnes, who, when she saw him approaching, smiled so brightly that he soon forgot his bitter thoughts,

and the prospect of spending a happy evening with her restored him to a sense of well-being, and his usual gay and high spirits.

Smiling and making a courtly obeisance to her, he offered her his arm, on which she lightly placed her white gloved hand, and glancing round with a smile upon the circle of friends whom she had been entertaining, she gracefully excused herself and quitted the room with her cousin.

It was quite late that night, not very long after Ruth and Agnes had retired and ceased their interchange of sweet confidences, that the communicating door between their own and Mrs. Grayson's room was noiselessly opened, and some one entered, softly approached their bedside, and for a moment stood perfectly still. Ruth had fallen asleep as soon as Agnes quit talking—while she, with half-closed eyes, mused and smiled to herself, dreaming sweet dreams, which thrilled her heart with a joy so great it was almost akin to pain.

A gentle touch on her hand aroused her from her reverie, and opening wide her eyes, she met in the dim light the frank eyes of Carl's mother looking down upon her, and instinctively she raised her soft arms and let them steal around her neck, whispering half aloud the sweet word "mother."

CHAPTER XL.

The Graysons were at home again. They had left the seashore before the gay season was well over, accompanied by Mrs. Hawkins and her baby son, Philip, who had accepted Mrs. Grayson's invitation to make her a visit—a visit which Mrs. Grayson assured her she had been looking forward to with pleasurable anticipation ever since her promise made to her two years previous, when they had first met at the White Sulphur Springs in the mountains—that this was a most favorable opportunity to fulfil that promise; and now, while Mr. Hawkins was absent in New York on business in the interest of his firm in Richmond, there was no reason why she should hurry home until his return.

Without much difficulty, Mrs. Hawkins had been overcome by Mrs. Grayson's reasoning, and much to the delight of them all, accompanied them home. Nellie was quite beside herself at the prospect of entertaining Philip at her own home, and immediately began devising a hundred ways for his babyship's amusement.

Mrs. Grayson, ever the same charming woman at home, as well as abroad, had spared no pains to make Mrs. Hawkins' visit as enjoyable and delightful as posssible, and during her stay had given a magnificent dinner party specially in her honor; and this was followed afterwards by others, not only dinner parties, but teas and luncheons, given in the circle of Mrs. Grayson's friends who had returned from their summer wanderings, and to all of these pleasant social gatherings Mrs. Hawkins had been cordially invited.

On leaving for home at the end of her three weeks' visit, she declared in all earnestness, that she had never enjoyed a visit anywhere half so much in her life, and if Mr. Hawkins were with her, she believed that she'd be quite content to stay for good and all just where she was.

"But as that cannot be," she continued, with a pleasant little laugh to Mrs. Grayson, as they rolled along in the carriage to the station, "you must give me the privilege and pleasure, before a great while, of welcoming you to my own home, in the beautiful 'city on the James'. Indeed, I shall be so glad to have you come, all of you—and Mr. Hawkins and I will do all we can to give you a pleasant time," she said, warmly, in her frank, winning way.

It was not until their return from the seashore, that Carl had written to Mr. Glenwood, asking his consent, or the honor, as he had laughingly told Agnes, of becoming his son-in-law and apologizing for his seeming to take advantage of him by wooing his Cousin Agnes without first asking his sanction to pay his formal addresses to her. Agnes had written to her mother at the same time, telling her unreservedly, as a dutiful daughter should, all about their love affairs; and though she was pretty certain what her mother's decision would be, she had closed her letter by saying, a little hypocritically it must be acknowledged, "Now, I hope you'll not scold me very much, dear Mamma, if I have disappointed you, but you know I have always been devotedly attached to Carl, and to tell the honest truth, I believe now I have always loved him from the first more than I ever dared to acknowledge even to myself."

The answers to these letters—Carl's and Agnes'—came in due time; and when Carl recognized Mr. Glenwood's handwriting on the letter which his uncle handed to him with a meaning smile, with a throbbing heart he hurriedly broke the seal, eager to learn how far or in what way his answer was to affect his engagement with his cousin.

Mr. Glenwood, after stating that Carl's and Agnes' engagement was, to him, an unexpected development of things, as he termed it; that he had carefully considered and reviewed his proposal, and that he hoped to live to see his daughter well and happily married to a man whom he thoroughly liked and respected—in a formal and dignified manner gave his consent for Carl to marry her, imposing, however, a certain condition, which Carl could not help thinking was somewhat hard and unreasonable, yet he had no choice left but accede to unless he should be able to prevail upon him to alter it; but, from the tone of his letter he had but little hope of accomplishing that.

Mr. Glenwood went on to say that for personal reasons, which it was unnecessary to state, he desired their marriage be postponed for at least one year; that Agnes had been absent from them so long, now she was to leave them, he believed that Carl would agree with him and Mrs. Glenwood that they were right in wishing to have her with them a few months before parting from her finally. They desired, too, that Agnes should return home the following December, and meanwhile they hoped there would be no opposition or obstacle thrown in the way to prevent her obeying their wishes in this matter, and so on.

Disappointment and pique showed visibly on his face as he read Mr. Glenwood's letter, but mastering his feelings, he took it at once to Agnes to read, while she handed him the letter she had received from her mother. There was silence until they had read and exchanged letters again, then she looked up and asked simply:

"What do you think of it? What can we do? Papa's decision will compel us to change our present plans."

He looked at her a moment with a curious expression on his face and sighed.

"Sore as the trial is to me to wait as your father suggests, yet I fear we can do nothing else at present. If I were to advise you as my heart prompts me at this moment," he went on, in the eager tone of a lover, "I must confess it would be to tempt you to swerve from your first duty to them—your parents—and persuade you to marry me without delay; but an equally powerful motive to do that which is right and honorable will make me regard their wishes, knowing, too, that I owe them at least so much." He was silent a moment, then resumed:

"Though your father seems so terribly in earnest, I shall write to him and try to prevail upon him to retract or change the condition which he has imposed; and then, if he refuses," he came closer to her and took both her hands in his, "the only thing left for me to do is to submit to his demand, and I beg you, dear Cousin, to be as true to me through the trying probation as I shall be true to you—or unless—," there was a change in his voice—, "unless you wish me to release you from an engagement which—"

"Hush, hush, you shall not say it," she said

quickly, with playful imperiousness, laying her hand upon his lips. "I will not hear you. You know well enough you are going to say something to wound me, and I repeat, you shall not say it."

"I won't, then," he said, taking her hand and holding it fast in his; "but let me say this, Agnes, I must do what is right, whether I like it or not, or I believe the result would eventually bring grief to us both."

Agnes drew a long breath, and her eyes glistened—then with glowing cheeks she looked tearfully up into his face and said, warmly, "Carl, you are a dear, noble fellow. I shall make no protest against your determination, because I know you are right; and here let me say, too, that you will find it no easy matter to coax papa to change his mind now that it is made up. No! I know him too well. He never decides hastily about anything, and I am sure about this particular matter he has sent you his answer after calmly, thoughtfully and deliberately considering it. I believe it is best to let matters take their course, and though my heart break for it I say, let us wait."

Looking at her just then—the fair, sweet face he loved clouded by a momentary sadness, it was hard to find it in his heart to take her at her word and wait—it seemed as if he must brush aside all, everything that hindered their early union, decide the question for themselves, let the consequences be what they would.

Suddenly a strange look flitted across his face—a look as though he were struggling to conquer some inward emotion fighting hard to get the mastery of him. Then he took her hand, and said in a tender voice:

"How I'm tempted, Agnes. But for all that I must do right. I will go now and leave you, and not prolong the pain to both by discussing what is inevitable. I love you, dear Cousin, too well for this, and so saying, with a look of pain in his eyes, he gently put her from him, then went out and left her alone.

The days wore on faster than ever it seemed to Agnes, bringing consciously near the time when she must leave the new and strong friendships which she had found in the Old North State, and return to her home in the far West—a home from which she had been absent so long, that already she was beginning to feel that it was no longer hers; and now especially was this true, since a new, absorbing interest had come into her life.

CHAPTER XLI.

Summer had gradually lost her identity under the gorgeous canopy of autumn, and for the next few weeks all Nature was masquerading in brilliant attire.

Two weeks before Carl, inspired with high hopes and aspirations, had left for Baltimore to enter upon the study of medicine, and to prepare himself for that profession for which he had a natural and genuine liking, and which profession he had often declared was to be the one to lead him into a career of usefulness and renown, and certainly after events proved that it was the very one for which he had been destined.

It was early one lovely morning, and Ruth had just finished her toilet, and stood beside the window in her room, looking far away, where a delicious blueness misted the tree-tops.

She had already roused Agnes out of her peaceful slumbers, and reminded her of her promise to go driving with her before the sun was fairly up. Agnes protested at first, and vowed she would rather have slept; but now she was standing before the mirror bestowing a last finishing touch to her hair, and sleepily studying the effect of a novel arrangement of her fluffy, short curls, which every now and then she touched up with a quick gesture from her rosy finger tips.

Presently she turned and cast a hurried glance toward the window where Ruth still stood, motionless, and making a pretty picture.

"You darling," cried Agnes, in her impetuous way. How sweet and patient you are, and

I've certainly been enough to try you. Never mind, I'll be ready now, real soon. I'll tell you, no one in the world but you could have coaxed me to forego my morning's nap and go for a drive before sunrise; but you know I'd do anything for you. ' And thus she rambled on for the next ten minutes, till she was dressed, and then playfully slipping her hand through Ruth's arm, hurried her down-stairs.

In the hall they encountered Dr. Leslie, who had just emerged from the library, and had several letters in his hand ready to post. He looked up with a sudden glance, and stopped instantly.

"Where are you two going?" he asked, smiling, and looked puzzled. "I fancy this is a new departure for you, Agnes," he continued, turning to her. "A walk before breakfast, and even sunrise."

"Oh, we are not going to walk, I assure you," she returned, laughing gayly. "No, indeed; I'm too lazy for that. But there's Ruth—well, that sort of a 'constitutional' may suit her, but I prefer one more agreeable. Cousin Helen has ordered the carriage for us, and we are going to the boulevards. Just now everyone is raving over the richness and beauty of the autumn foliage, and we are going to see it for ourselves 'under the glory of the morning sun,' as Ruth says. Miss Duval told us yesterday that the boulevards were never so beautiful, and if we wished to see them at their best, we should see them now. You might come, too, if you liked," she added, smiling archly up into his face. "We shall be so glad to have you."

"I wish I could, but you'll have to excuse me this morning," he replied, with a glance at Ruth,

upon whose cheek a conscious flush came deepening. "But, surely, you are not going without breakfast, are you?" he asked, taking his hat from the rack preparatory to going out.

"No. Julia has gone now to prepare a most inviting feast for us," said Ruth, looking in the direction of the dining-room. "Ah, here she comes now with a basket of fruit, which we shall take with us; and, there is the carriage waiting. We would better go."

It was one of the loveliest of October mornings, with all its glowing colors upon the full-foliaged woods, and the broad, bright fields belting the city. The crisp, autumnal air was pervaded with that soft Indian summer haze, which made the landscape picture so mystically beautiful that one could not help fancying that Titian would have rejoiced to revel in it.

It was still early when Ruth and Agnes reached the boulevard, but now the sun was slowly climbing up above the tree-tops, and as the shafts of sunlight struck the mica-dust glittering like crushed silver in the white graveled roadway, then flashed over the iris-colored woods wreathed in feathery mist, they both exclaimed simultaneously:

"Oh, how beautiful! How entrancing!"

As they drove further and further on into the cool, enchanted parkland, leaving the busy hum of life behind them, the sylvan vistas glowed, heroically rejoicing, as though unmindful that their Gethsemane agony was so near at hand.

Each spear of grass was helmed in crystal foil.

Ruth turned her radiant face to Agnes and said, enthusiastically, "Isn't it gorgeous? Isn't it lovely? Do stop the ponies, Agnes, and let me get out here."

"What for?" Agnes asked in a surprised tone.

"I want to get a view of this from that bluff on the left," nodding in the direction of the point. "I'm sure the view must be magnificent from there." Agnes drew the ribbons on the pretty travelers, and they came to an impatient halt.

"But don't you wish to see it, too?" Ruth asked, turning to Agnes, as she was about to get out. "Suppose you let me hold the ponies, and you go first? I can see it afterwards."

"You unselfish creature," laughed Agnes, "I guess I can see it afterwards, too. You go on. I suspect it will keep till I have a chance to see it," she added, nudging Ruth from her with her elbow, and with the long whip she flicked a fly off Nabob's back. The pony gave a wicked prance.

"Do hold them fast, Agnes," Ruth urged, as she sprang lightly to the ground; then turning a little way back to where the bluff started and gradually sloped upward, she ran easily to the top.

With one small, white hand uplifted to shade her face from the glaring rays of the sun which smote through a rift in the gorgeous canopy, she stood, her body swaying with rhythmic motion as she turned from right to left, drinking in the beauty and freshness of the brilliant scene around her.

Overhead the sky was a clear, pale blue, and not a cloud was visible upon the bell-shaped dome.

Across the roadway, and almost at her feet, lay a quiet glade, sun-barred, but cool and flower-

scented. A little cabin stood a short way back, rudely breaking the charm of perfect harmony in the glowing landscape.

A few scattered houses of grayish hue dotted a distant hillside, and from the chimney of one rose a blue film of smoke that floated lazily across the light, tender blue of the heavens, hovered a moment above the tree-tops, like wings of birds, and then resumed its way.

"The prospect is glorious from up there, and I want you to see it," said Ruth, as she took her seat beside Agnes, and then put out her hand to take the reins and whip.

"No, not now. The ponies are restless, and I don't believe they'll stand another minute. I can get just as pretty view from some other point, for there seems to be new beauties and surprises all along the way."

"Yes, I think so, too, answered Ruth, "I don't think I ever saw autumn tints half so lovely as they are now." Then glancing over the woods, added with a gleam of spirit: "If these beautiful woodland acres were mine, not another tree should be felled upon them. It is an act of perfect vandalism to cut these magnificent oaks. Why, to me, some trees possess so much individuality, that they seem almost human. What grand monuments, too, they are, reminding us of the days without a history. Oh, I do wish these could be spared."

"Whoa!" Agnes suddenly tightened the reins and the ponies came to a halt. "Which way shall we go, to the right or left?" she asked, turning to Ruth.

They had reached a slight elevation, where two roadways swerved gracefully away on either

side, and Ruth cast an undecided, anticipatory glance down each glowing inlet.

On the right, the curving roadway, smooth and shining, wound through crimson bushes and golden leaves crowning the tall trees, which flung tremulous shadows across the way, then suddenly slipped out of sight behind a flower-starred bluff.

To the left, the sunlit drive sloped gently downward, and where the shadows darkly lurked, a gurgling stream leaped across, spanned by a rustic bridge, and then the road rose smooth and white on the other side.

Ruth drew a long breath and filled her lungs with the delicious aroma with which the air was charged through and through. It seemed she had never realized before how inconceivable the joy of living in such a splendid luminous day as this. To exist was exultation.

"Well, I'm waiting," said Agnes. "Decide which way."

Suddenly and almost simultaneously the report of three rifle shots broke the sylvan quiet, and the surrounding hills beat back the obtruding echoes.

Quick as a flash the mettlesome ponies gave a startled leap and plunged forward, but Agnes held them with a firm, strong grip, while she coaxed them back into their former submissiveness. Somehow, this morning, they seemed bent on tragic mischief, but she held them with the zest and vigor of conscious mastery.

At that moment two negro boys scantily clad, and with brown bare feet and legs, emerged from the dewy depths of a ruddy thicket near the bridge, each with a gun and accompanied by sev-

eral mongrel hounds, which scampered here and there, with tails up and noses lifted, as if questioning the woodland fastnesses for a fresh scent of game. Then a large tan hound, who seemed to lead the pack, whined softly, sniffed the air, and with tail erect, started off, hythmically baying, up the winding road.

The boys crossed the bridge and strolled slowly on in the direction the dogs had taken.

"Suppose we follow them," suggested Ruth, meaning the boys, "and then we can drive beyond the bridge and return by the road on the left, unless you wish to go another route."

"Just as you say." Agnes gave the ponies an admonitory tap with the tasseled end of the whip, and they fell quietly into their easy moving gait down the sanded drive.

Just as they crossed the bridge, a freshened breeze whisked a shower of yellow leaves across the freckled roadway, then trundled them long with a sibilant timbre down a darkling nook against the buttress of the bridge.

"That's a pretty view of the Military School," said Agnes, flirting her whip in the direction of the martial quarters, whose handsome buildings and well-kept grounds were upon a commanding eminence to the right; "I've a notion to drive over there," she went on, with twinkling eyes, "if somebody wouldn't suspect me of entertaining sentimental designs upon one or more of the cadets."

Ruth turned and looked at her with unexpected seriousness, as though she wondered what Agnes meant by such a capricious speech.

"You, dearie," Agnes burst out laughing. "I knew I would startle you. I have no idea of

doing anything of the kind. But here we are at the bluff from which I'm to have my view of the promised land, and if you'll hold these little wicked blacks, I'll jump out right here, and you can drive on past that clump of willows to the right and wait for me a little beyond where the roads fork."

Ruth took the russet reins, and then placed the slender whip in its rack. Agnes had got out, and the next moment began to scale the tall bluff fronting the Military School, while Ruth drove to the point she had indicated; but on account of the sun-glare, turned and drove back under the protecting shadow of the hill, whose side rose almost perpendicular to quite a height. She glanced upward as soon as she had stopped the ponies, and saw Agnes standing right above her, smiling and gesturing to her.

"Can't you find some one to hold the ponies, and come up, too?" she called down. "You have no idea how beautiful it is."

"I should like to come," said Ruth, looking ruefully up at Agnes, "but the trouble is to find 'the some one' to hold the ponies."

Just then two horsemen in bucolic garb appeared around a sudden curve, stared stolidly, and passed on. Scarcely had they gone out of sight before a half-grown boy, wearing a slouched hat that nearly hid his face, came trudging along, whistling softly to himself.

"Ruth, there's your opportunity," said Agnes, looking down with an amused smile and speaking under breath. "There's 'the some one' to hold the ponies." She glanced at the boy now passing near the carriage.

Ruth accosted him at once.

"Good-morning, sir. Won't you do a favor for me? Won't you hold these ponies till I go up on that hill to look at those buildings over there?" waving her hand toward the Military School. "I'll not keep you long, and I'll be very much obliged." Her tone was kind and persuasive.

The boy stopped, hesitated, and then looked at the ponies apprehensively.

"Be thay uns gentul?" he asked, pointing to the ponies with an awkward wave of his hand.

"Oh, yes, if you'll manage them right; but I don't want you to drive, but just hold them. I don't believe they much like the locomotive whistle, but I hardly think a train is due this way in several hours—unless—yes, there may be a freight train."

The boy still wavered. Ruth gave him a look full of entreaty, and supposing his hesitancy resulted from another cause than embarrassment, said in a half-apologetic tone, as if she were afraid of giving offence:

"Of course I shall pay you for your time and trouble." She took out her purse, and held it in her hand.

The next moment he moved mechanically across the road, walked to the heads of the ponies and with a cautious hand took hold of the check rein. Suddenly Nabob threw up his head with a resentful toss, flared his nostrils, and eyed the boy inquisitorially, while Prince stood unconcernedly quiet as if disdaining any notice of the wary interference, further than a furtive glance.

The boy let go the rein and stepped back.

"Oh, Nabob often does that way to stran-

gers," said Ruth, getting out of the carriage and going up to the unruly horse. "I think he just does it to see if they are afraid of him. But he's a real nice fellow for all that, aren't you, Nabob, and are you going to behave nicely?" she asked, playfully patting his glossy neck. Then turning to the boy again:

"You can sit in the carriage if you like, perhaps you can manage them better."

"Nor, marm; I'd ruther stan' rite harye, an' hold 'em. I bleave thet thar Nabog, as you uns call 'em, has got ther very tarnul debil in 'em. I nuver seed a horse show ther white uv his eyes thet wern't mean. Jest see 'em backen his years, too."

Ruth laughed good-naturedly.

"Aren't you coming, Ruth?" Agnes called to her in a far-off voice, which came to her faintly down the bluff, for she was going up toward the crest.

"Yes, in a minute," Ruth answered. The boy glanced up perplexedly, in the direction the voice had come.

"Now, you hold the horses till I come back. There's something for your trouble," said Ruth, slipping a half dollar into his sun-browned hand. The boy eyed it incredulously, then put it into his pocket.

Ruth started off, then turned back. A new impulse came to her.

"I forgot to ask you—what is your name?"

"Joe—Joe Simpson," he said, dimly wondering why she should wish to know.

"Do you live in the country, and anywhere near here?"

"Yes, I liv jest back uv them houses over thayre," nodding his head.

Ruth glanced the way he nodded.

"Oh, not far away, then?" she said.

"Nor, sum three miles ur more," he answered, in a sort of resentful tone, as if he objected to being questioned further.

"Very well, Joe. I'm going now. I think the ponies will be good, and not give you any trouble. But should a train come along, be sure to be careful and keep a tight hold of the reins. You musn't let them think you are afraid of them."

She went to the slant whence Agnes had begun the ascent, and followed her with leisurely steps up to the summit.

"What kept you, darling?" Agnes asked, when Ruth had reached her. "I saw the boy take hold of the ponies, and thought the matter was settled, so I came on thinking you would overtake me."

"Yes, but I had to coax him," she explained. "He was afraid of the horses at first, yet I don't think they'll give him any trouble."

Agnes interrupted her. "Now, isn't that grand over there—and there—and there," pointing toward the various points. "And this air! Isn't it delicious, sweet, fresh and cool? I don't wonder you have so many hoary heads hereabouts. People can't die in an atmosphere like this. Why, I feel as if I could live always, here."

She threw up her hands with a pretty challenge and laughed for very joy in the rich fulness of perfect health.

Ruth did not answer her, but stood silent, her face glowing. She rarely spoke when strong emotions held her. Her attitude was more expressive and eloquent than anything she could have uttered.

With her hands tightly clasped before her, as one in the act of passionate adoration, she seemed to see in actual existence what Israel's leader saw by faith in the vista of futurity.

At last Ruth withdrew her gaze, sighed sóftly, and turning to Agnes, said simply.

"Come. Let's go. I fear the boy has grown impatient."

"But don't you feel repaid for coming?" asked Agnes, gathering a cluster of waxlike leaves and crimson berries, and then fastened them in the bosom of her dress.

"Yes, indeed, more than repaid," she answered.

They had been descending the bluff meanwhile, and now returned to the carriage where the boy, with an impatient air, still held the fidgety horses.

"Well, I didn't intend to keep you waiting so long," Ruth began, apologetically, "but I hope you didn't mind."

"Nor, not mutch," he answered candidly.

"Oh, no, I'm sure you didn't mind," interposed Agnes brightly, smiling at him. "Now, I'm going to give you some of our grapes and pears, for keeping you so long. We brought them along for our breakfast, but we can't eat them all. Do you like fruit?" She took the basket from the seat of the carriage as she spoke and approached him.

"Here, tell me," she went on, in a friendly way, "did you ever see any grapes and pears as fine as these? I don't believe you can raise such fruit as this here, or in North Carolina anywhere, though you have almost everything that one wants or can even think of. See, aren't these pears beauties?" She held up two of the finest.

The boy merely glanced at them with a sort of contemptuous smile, and looked away. "Yes, thay uns air rite nice," he said, carelessly, "but we uns ken rase jest as good uns an' jest as big uns in Norf Caroliner. An' them thayre green grapes—ugh! thay ain't mutch. We uns got plenty rite bout harye ur grate site bettar."

"Why, John," Agnes laughed merrily—"Joe," suggested Ruth, smiling. "Well Joe, then," Agnes corrected, and continued laughing. "These splendid pears came all the way from my home in California, and these Malaga grapes came from that State, too; but not where I live. Suppose you taste one and see how you like it; and if you think they are nice, I'll give you this whole bunch. Here, just try one."

He looked toward Ruth questioningly. "Yes, Joe, try one," she said, "I believe you will like it; I think they are excellent."

Agnes plucked one from the bunch and handed it to him. "Now, if you don't say that is nice, I'll think you don't know a good thing when you see it."

The boy took it doubtfully, and slowly put it into his mouth, while Ruth and Agnes, smilingly watched him.

"Well, how do you like it?" Agnes asked. "Nice, isn't it?"

"Ther thing's so tarnul tuff I can't bite it," he said, holding the grape between his teeth.

"Well, I'll promise you it'll not melt in your mouth," Agnes said. "Now bite it." He let his teeth come suddenly down upon it, and then swallowed it with a gulp, holding his hand to his throat.

"Why, Joe, what made you do that? What's the matter? Don't you like it?"

"Stuff! I bleave I'm pisined," he answered, with rising indignation.

Agnes burst out into a merry laugh. "What an idea! Of course you are not. See here. I'm going to eat some of the these grapes from the same bunch, and if you are poisoned—then I'm poisoned." She ate three or four, and passed the bunch to Ruth. "You may try them, too."

Ruth smiled, took the grapes and began to eat them.

"Well, I see very plainly, Joe, that you don't like Malaga grapes," Agnes said, "and I can't teach you to like them. But here are the pears—you may have these two if you like."

"Yes, I'll take 'em. I don't eat 'em myself; but I ken sell 'em."

"Very well. I don't care what you do with them. You are welcome to them."

She turned to Ruth and said something to her in a low tone, and the next moment Ruth took out her purse and opened it.

"How much?" she asked, holding the purse toward Agnes.

"Oh, anything you like. I'll make you my almoner. A dollar or so—five dollars, if you haven't less. You are in the habit of dispen sing"—she was about to say alms, but instead, said—"good deeds. Hereafter I shall always take my purse with me, so as to be prepared—as you are, you know."

Ruth handed the boy the money, a gold piece; he took it, examined it, and then stared first at Ruth and then Agnes.

"I spect you uns didn't mean to gim me so mutch?"

"Oh, yes; that's all right," said Agnes,

quickly—"you keep it, and when you do us another favor, we'll give you some more." Then turning to Ruth—"Come, darling; we must be going. Cousin Helen will be wondering what has become of us, and I just know Cousin Ralph will think the ponies have run away, or something terrible has happened."

The girls got into the carriage, while the boy stood beside the horses and made a show of holding them. "Now, that will do, Joe. You may give me the reins," Agnes said, cheerily. "Thank you. See, they are in a hurry to be going. "Good-bye, Joe," they both called out, and the horses were off.

By the time they reached home breakfast was ready, which fact Nellie announced from the front veranda, where she and her mother were apparently watching for them. Agnes ran up the steps declaring that she felt as if she had taken a tonic, which had set her all a-tingling.

"Then I suppose you are quite ready for your breakfast," said Mrs. Grayson.

"Indeed I am, and I hope Aunt Milly has some of those nice corn-muffins, that no one can make half as good as she. But where is Cousin Ralph?" she asked, breaking abruptly off and glancing round, "I wanted to see him before he went out."

"Very well, I shall be most happy to accommodate you," Dr. Leslie said, stepping through the open window upon the veranda. "Do you wish to see me now, or will after breakfast do as well?" he added, with an amused laugh.

"Oh, Cousin Ralph!" she cried, turning suddenly round, much taken by surprise. "I didn't know you were anywhere near; but I am so

glad. We had a perfectly glorious time this morning, and you should have gone with us. You don't know how much you missed."

"I don't doubt it. But is that what you wanted to see me about?" he asked. He could not help smiling at her tone.

"No, no; you know it is not—but, something else—quite another matter altogether. I will tell you"—she paused.

"Well?" he inquired.

She shook her head and listened. A silver bell was ringing, and Mrs. Grayson was saying, "Come, let us go to breakfast."

CHAPTER XLII.

Through the bright, happy weeks which followed, weeks of almost unbroken gaiety for Ruth and Agnes, the flying shuttle of Time was silently linking together and weaving in its ever busy loom, the tangled broken thrums, as well as the smooth silver threads, of certain human lives in our story, and fashioning them into a strangely checkered web.

It only lacked a week of the day fixed for Agnes' departure for home. It was Thanksgiving day, clear, bright and breezy. As was the custom on this day, divine service was being held in a number of the city churches, and at one of these, the First Baptist church, Mrs. Grayson, Agnes and Ruth were in attendance.

The able sermon, by Mr. Burns, the pastor, had been concluded with a touching appeal for aid in behalf of a most worthy cause—the Masonic Orphan Asylum, at Oxford, and which appeal was being liberally responded to, when suddenly the large congregation was startled by the sharp ringing of the fire-bells.

The bells rang faster and louder. In a few moments the church was rapidly but quietly emptying. Men, women and children, ran breathlessly past, and to the oft repeated queries, "Where is it?" "What is it?" no one seemed to know or stopped to make sure. All went rushing in the direction of the dense cloud of smoke, rolling up fierce and lurid in the western part of the city. Presently a man cried out as he went running by:

"Yes, it must go. Nothing can save it. It is beyond the water-main."

"What? What?" called out a dozen voices at once.

"The Hotel Zinzendorf — the grand, new hotel," was the almost pathetic reply.

It was, indeed, the beautiful Zinzendorf that was on fire, and the flames had made such headway before discovered that nothing short of a miracle could possibly save it from total destruction.

Mrs. Grayson drove with Ruth and Agnes from the church directly to the burning building; and as soon as they caught sight of it, they knew that it was doomed, and in a little while all would be over.

It was a terrible, but grand and splendid sight, and thousands of spectators looked on from a little distance, awed and fascinated.

When at last the building was consumed, leaving nothing but the tall chimneys, the broken machinery and some portions of the walls standing, which seemed but a cruel mockery, the crowd turned away and began slowly to disperse. The wreck had been complete, and now the desolation was already felt.

It was on the evening after Ruth and Agnes had returned home from their last drive together, that Dr. Leslie met them in the hall with an open letter in his hand, and a peculiarly bright smile upon his handsome face. He had just come from Mrs. Grayson's room.

"Now, I just know you have some good news for us, Cousin Ralph," was Agnes' merry greeting, and looking him straight in the face, "I can always tell. What is it? Do let us know. We are eager to hear."

Dr. Leslie glanced toward Ruth, and let his

eyes rest full upon her for a moment before he answered, a rosy color flushing her face meanwhile:

"The letter is addressed to me, but it contains news—something which I feel quite sure will make Ruth very happy. Let us go into the library, and she can read it there without interruption."

"News for me?" Ruth asked in a tone of surprise, while Agnes drew back hesitatingly, and said in the same breath, "Oh, some personal matter, perhaps I had better not come if—"

She looked from Ruth to her cousin, holding her hands behind her.

"Oh, yes you will," Dr. Leslie said, coaxingly, and he held out his hand to her. "It is something you must know, too—something I beileve will give you almost as much pleasure as Ruth. But, as I said, it more directly concerns Ruth. Come, both of you."

As soon as they entered the library Dr. Leslie handed Ruth the open letter, saying, "Read that, if you please," and he and Agnes walked to the window and sat down, with their backs to her, and Agnes began at once to entertain him with details of their drive.

At first Ruth could hardly hold the letter, her hand was shaking so. The characters seemed to swim before her, and it was several moments before she could make out that the writer was "William H. Dupont." She waited a moment, struggling for composure, then began the letter and read it absorbingly through.

When she had finished a low, convulsive sigh escaped her, and Dr. Leslie and Agnes, turning quickly round, saw that she had bowed her head

upon the table before her, and was weeping silently.

Dr. Leslie rose at once and approached her, and bending over her, said softly:

"Why, Ruth, I thought you would be glad. Surely you cannot be sorry to know that you have found a sister."

But there was no need to soothe her with words of compassion.

For an instant she was silent—but only for an instant. In the next she raised her face, radiant with triumphant joy, her eyes shining through tears, which she hastily brushed away.

"O, I am, I am," she said. "Oh, I cannot tell you how happy I am. Indeed, I'm crying from sheer excess of joy—," she could say no more.

Agnes had risen in her eagerness, wondering what it all meant; and came and knelt beside her, slipping one arm around her waist.

"Have patience with me a little while, Agnes," she said, pushing the letter toward her; "I will tell you all about it as soon as I can accustom myself to this unexpected happiness. I hardly know what I'm doing or what I'm saying—Miss Dupont—Eloise Dupont, who nursed Mrs. Grayson through her long illness—do you remember her? But, yes, of course you do; why, Agnes, she is my sister."

"Your sister? You are dreaming! Why, Cousin Ralph, what does she mean?" Agnes faltered, looking up with astonished eyes into her cousin's smiling face. "Is it true? I do not understand at all."

"Yes, it is even so," answered Dr. Leslie. "And if you will allow me to read you Mr. Du-

pont's letter, you will readily understand why, or how naturally this is true."

He took the letter from her hand, and while she still knelt beside Ruth, Dr. Leslie read the letter aloud, she, meanwhile, listening to every word with glowing cheeks and kindling eyes. When he was done, Agnes caught Ruth's hands between her own, and in her eager, joyous way, cried:

"Oh, darling! darling! Isn't it delightful? Let me congratulate you. To think that Miss Dupont should turn out to be your half-sister—and—and so rich and beautiful and accomplished, and now going to be married, after such a charming romance in her own life. Indeed, it seems like some pretty fairy tale, and I'm not quite sure that I believe it yet."

"I can scarcely believe it myself," said Dr. Leslie, "but there's no mistaking the plain facts in Mr. Dupont s letter."

"Please give me the letter, Cousin Ralph, and let me run over some parts of it myself. Oh, I do wonder what mamma will say when I tell her," she added, as Dr. Leslie handed her the letter.

"Now, just listen to this," reading from the second page, after skipping the introductory part of the document, as though they had not read it themselves: "When we agreed to adopt the child, for reasons not necessary to state here, we exacted from Mr. Arnold a promise that he would renounce all claims to her, we, on the other hand, agreeing to give her our name and part of our fortune, and do by her just as though she were our own daughter. Eloise was quite sixteen years of age before she knew that we were not

her parents; but more than this, Mrs. Dupont declined to divulge. And not even Howard, our only son, three years Eloise's senior, was aware of the true relationship between her and himself until he had been one year at Harvard."

Agnes stopped reading and looked up, laughing.

"Now, that is what I call a first-class romance. Was there ever anything in fiction half so fascinating? Why, I almost wish it were myself. I tell you I'd give a good deal to be the heroine of such a pretty story."

She read on silently a moment, then said, impulsively, as though this was the first time Dr. Leslie and Ruth had heard the contents of the letter. "Now listen again—isn't this too good to be true?"

"Eloise will write her sister, Miss Arnold, today; and by the same post you will receive invitations to attend her and Howard's marriage, which will take place on the 12th of December at Grace church, and the reception at my residence on Fifth Avenue, the same evening.

"Mrs. Dupont joins me in a cordial invitation that your entire family—that is, your sister's, or any friend or relative that may be visiting you, be with us on this happy occasion."

Agnes could read no more, she dropped the letter in Ruth's lap, and looked up, her face beaming.

"So you see that includes your cousin, Miss Agnes Glenwood. Of course we'll go; and I'll tell you what else we'll do. You know papa has written for us to meet him in New York on the 6th of December. Well, we can leave here on the 5th, Cousin Helen, Ruth and you, Cousin

Ralph—remain in New York until after the wedding, and then Ruth will go home with me and stay until you come for her. Now, isn't that a perfectly lovely program?" she asked, brightly, looking from one to the other. "Indeed, it is the only thing that can reconcile me to leaving North Carolina just now."

Dr. Leslie became grave at once, and with a quiet, gentle manner looked down at Ruth and asked:

"Do you approve Agnes' plan, Ruth? Do you—would you like to go with her home?"

"Yes, I should like to go very much."

"You sweet darling!" cried Agnes, turning and kissing her again and again. "I knew you would. Well, I shall consider that point settled; and now I'm going to write mamma and tell her you are coming. I know she'll be delighted."

When she reached the door, she stopped, looked back, and asked in a faltering tone:

"Oh, Carl—Cousin Ralph—did you write him this morning, as you said you would?"

"Yes, and I suppose he will get my letter to-morrow. By-the-way, that reminds me, I had a letter from him to-day. He is going to New York with us to tell you good-bye, he says." He took a letter from his pocket, meanwhile looking at Agnes with twinkling eyes. "Here is his letter," he added. "You may read it if you like."

"Very well," she returned, with a little friendly nod, and she tried to look him straight in the eyes; but with a low "thank you," she blushed, laughed, and then hurriedly left the room.

In the next two hours interview together, Dr. Leslie and Ruth arranged their future plans, and

when she rose to go, it was with a serenely happy face she held out her hands to him to say good-night. Not less than ten minutes he kept the soft palms in his light clasp, while he was speaking; and when she at last withdrew her hands, upon the third finger of the left hand the glitter and sparkle of a magnificent diamond ring had replaced the brilliant gleam of the emerald and pearls.

Agnes was still sitting up writing when Ruth went to her room, but she glanced up archly from her desk and gave a little yawn, and, the next moment catching sight of the splendid jewel flashing upon Ruth's hand, with a low, soft laugh, she said:

"Ah, you cunning rogue," then bent her head and resumed her letter-writing to—Carl—smiling softly.

A few days later Dr. Leslie, Mrs. Grayson and Nellie accompanied Agnes and Ruth to New York, where Mr. Glenwood met them. Carl had joined them at Baltimore, and, though looking a trifle thinner than when he left home in the fall, otherwise he was the same bright, hopeful spirit—the same handsome Carl.

To Mrs. Grayson's anxious inquiries about his health, Carl laughingly replied that it was hard work that was reducing his avoirdupois, when Nellie burst in with—

"Why, Carl; you know you haven't done a thing but write long letters to Cousin Agnes ever since you left home. She gets letters from you this long"—holding out both arms full length—"every day."

Carl playfully laid his hand over her mouth, and drew her down beside him.

"Hush, Nell; you don't know what you are talking about; and, besides, little folks shouldn't tell tales out of school."

"Nor big ones either," was the pert rejoinder.

Mr. and Mrs. Dupont and Eloise called the next day at the hotel where the Graysons were staying, to invite them to their home as their guests; but the Graysons were out when they called, so the Duponts left their cards, and a note of friendly respects, asking them to waive all ceremony and dine with them that evening at 7 o'clock, extending their hospitality to Mr. Glenwood and Agnes.

Punctually at the hour appointed, they drove to the palatial Dupont residence on Fifth Avenue, not far from Central Park, where they were received by the host and hostess—both handsome and distinguished-looking people—with marked courtesy, and even cordiality, and shown every attention.

The meeting between Ruth and Eloise was tenderly affectionate and touching; and Eloise's beautiful face lighted with pleasure when she hastened to Mrs. Grayson, Dr. Leslie and Agnes, took them by the hands, and expressed the most heart-felt delight at seeing them again.

Soon after their arrival, dinner was announced. Mrs. Dupont gave the signal, and in due order the little party entered the spacious and lofty dining-room, where superb plate glittered on the board, and beautiful flowers seemed to bloom everywhere. The elegant repast, so faultlessly served, passed off delightfully.

When they had adjourned to the drawing-room, Eloise, unobserved, managed to draw Ruth and Agnes apart from the rest of the company

and took them away to her own luxurious apartments, where for an hour or more they were busied in the sweet mysteries which exercise so pervading a power over the mind and heart of the bride-elect, generally.

As the Grayson's were leaving, Mrs. Dupont held Mrs. Grayson's hand in a warm pressure for a few moments, while she said with her most gracious smile:

"I regret that you have denied us both the privilege and happiness of having you as our guest during your stay in the city, but if you are here any length of time, I hope we shall see a good deal of you," glancing around the circle.

While this conversation was going on, Ruth drew aside Eloise, and said, caressingly, "When shall we be again so happy? It seems hard to give you up so soon after I have found you; but out in the crowded world where your destiny must call you, let me beg that you'll not cease to love and think of me, my beautiful—my peerless sister."

Eloise slipped her arms gently around her and whispered, "Fear not, my sweet sister, nothing can ever lessen my love for you, and in my heart, side by side with another image, yours shall ever live, then how can I forget you, little one?" she added in a playful tone, kissing her good-bye.

Eloise and Howard Dupont's wedding day dawned without a cloud.

Never did bride look more radiant and beautiful, never groom hadsomer and happier, than did the distinguished couple who, in the full tide of their youth and hope, stood before the white flower-decked altar in Grace church on a Tues-

day evening, and then and there, in the presence of a brilliant throng, and under the flashing radiance of electric lights and the thrilling strains of sweet music, mingled with the grave, low tones of the minister's voice, solemnly joined their destinies for better or for worse.

Immediately following the beautiful and impressive marriage service, the reception held at the magnificent mansion of the Duponts was an event so sumptuous and brilliant that it was unusually notable, even among the elite of the fashionable world who were present.

Two days later the sad partings—too sad to dwell upon, were over. Mr. Glenwood, Agnes and Ruth had departed for California, and Dr. Leslie, Mrs. Grayson and Nellie had gone to their home in the South, while Carl returned to Baltimore to resume the medical course he was pursuing.

Howard Dupont took his bride abroad for a year's travel, and would spend the winter in Egypt.

The months which followed sped swiftly by, and very active, busy months they were, too, for Dr. Leslie.

The winter snows fell and melted, and the winter winds changed so swiftly, yet naturally, into mild spring breezes, and these as rapidly softened into fragrant summer zephyrs, that ere one fully realized the charm of the fading season, suggestions of autumn tints were beginning to show themselves amongst the foliage of the trees.

One evening, toward the close of September, when the local evening paper announced, as it generally did from time to time, the names of its citizens coming and going to the World's

Great Exposition at Chicago, it was without surprise or comment that one read among the list, the names of Dr. Leslie and the Graysons. To be sure they would go. It would have seemed a little singular for them not—people with ample means, cultivated tastes, and who went almost everywhere.

But, three weeks later, when the same local paper contained an extracted communication from a San Francisco paper of an event which had recently occurred in that city, an event in which Dr. Leslie and the Graysons figured prominently, it caused a ripple of excitement which rose wave high, and so improbable did it seem to the majority, that some even smiled with a self-complacent sneer, to think that any one should be found credulous enough to take the matter seriously.

"Nothing but a fake—a newspaper sensation. Bah! don't believe a word of it," sneered these wise skeptics. The communication alluded to and which had set the town agog, read as follows:

"Leslie-Arnold. A pretty wedding occurred this morning about 8 o'clock at the magnificent home of Mr. and Mrs. George Glenwood, on —— Street, the lovely bride being Miss Ruth Arnold, formerly of this city, now of North Carolina; and the groom, Dr. Ralph Leslie, an eminent physician from the same State.

"Amongst the immediate friends and relatives of the bride and groom who witnessed the ceremony, and afterwards attended the elegant reception, were the groom's sister, Mrs. Helen Grayson and her daughter, Miss Nellie, who accompanied him from North Carolina.

"Dr. and Mrs. Leslie will leave at noon to-day for New York, and from thence sail for an extended tour abroad."

Previous to this event, the Glenwoods and Ruth had spent a month at the World's Exposition, and here Carl had joined them, but he did not attend his uncle's marriage.

There had been some talk of a double wedding, but Carl and Agnes had made other arrangements, and he had to serve another year.

CHAPTER XLIII.

It was a lovely June afternoon, golden with sunshine and redolent with the perfume of roses. It was the day after Dr. Leslie and Ruth had returned from their bridal journey.

A carriage with visitors, who had come to call and to offer their congratulations and friendly respects, had just departed when Dr. Leslie's own handsome phæton drove up to the side entrance and stopped, the driver stepped quickly down, and then stood waiting.

Only a few minutes, however, he had to wait, for presently Dr. Leslie and Ruth appeared in the doorway. She was dressed in the daintiest of white mull, exquisitely trimmed in lace, and wore a richly plumed white hat.

As she paused to fasten her gloves, she did not see that her husband, who was looking at least ten years younger, was watching her with admiring eyes and a smile of perfect content, while he was thinking that in all her life, with all her grace and purity and sweetness, she had never looked so beautiful as she did now.

Just then a little figure, clad in airy robes of white, with bright eyes and shining hair, glided softly up behind her, and suddenly a pair of tiny arms clasped her tightly around the waist.

"Oh, Cousin Ruth, do let me kiss you goodbye before you go. Pshaw! There it is again. I will call you Cousin Ruth, and Carl said I musn't—but you know that you are not my aunt at all. Let me put my arms around your neck just once, and give you one little squeeze. I shan't crumple your laces one bit. You know I

love you so much, Cousin Ruth, and I'm so sorry—"

Nellie checked herself suddenly, and looked confused, then added:

"Yes, I love you next to Carl, Uncle Ralph and mamma."

At the mention of her mother's name, Mrs. Grayson came out on the veranda, and going quickly up to Ruth, laid her hand caressingly upon her shoulder, and kissed her two or three times, saying, "I hope you will have a pleasant drive, my dear. The weather is fine for such recreation this afternoon. God bless you, darling," she could not help adding, fervently, when Ruth had responded to her remark, and then turned and preceded Dr. Leslie down the steps, at the same moment, overhearing Nellie say to her mother:

"Oh, Mamma; I did so want to tell her."

"What did she mean?" Ruth asked herself. "Tell me what?" But the next instant she put the wondering thought away. She would not suffer any cloud of conjecture to shadow the golden sunshine of the happy present.

Before taking her seat in the phæton she went up to Nabob and Prince and patted each on his glossy neck by way of a friendly greeting.

"They are just as beautiful as ever," she said, with almost childish delight; "and I do believe they know me. See how they toss their pretty heads. If possible they are handsomer than they were when I saw them last."

"Yes, I think they are myself," said Dr. Leslie, and with an indulgent smile he went up to her, and in the most delicately considerate way took out his pocket handkerchief and wiped her daintily gloved hands.

The caress—for it seemed nothing more than a gentle caress, was so eloquent with self-denying fondness, that she looked up at him with a radiant smile—a smile so radiant that it made him feel how pleasant a thing it was to have the constant care of this lovely girl committed to his charge as his precious wife. It seemed to him as though his eyes had been suddenly opened, for he looked upon her now with such a new and tender interest, such a sweet and protecting devotion. Yes, all these emotions though familiar, had a new significance to him now, while blending and absorbing another's life history with his own.

"To the boulevard, John," said Dr. Leslie to the driver, when he had mounted to his seat, and Dr. Leslie turned smilingly, waved his hand to Mrs. Grayson and Nellie, who stood watching them from the veranda, and soon the vehicle whirled rapidly out of sight.

That was a wonderfully delightful drive to Ruth, and the delicious memories which clung about that afternoon she never forgot through all the changing scenes of her life. She was so supremely happy and content, and even Nabob and Prince seemed to know that this was a special occasion, for they flew along the hard, level roads as if girded with new life and energy, proudly arching and tossing their heads, their silver-tipped harness flashing in the sunlight, and soon they were far beyond the environments of the city.

Overhead the sky was one glorious vault of blue, while the air was harmonious with the song of birds and permeated with the sweet scent of wild flowers.

When the driver at last turned the horses' heads homeward, there was a luminous fading sun-glow over the quiet landscape, and the shadows were slowly lengthening toward the west.

As they passed the Military School, perched high upon the crest of a beautiful wooded hillside with its terraced lawn and barrack square spreading away in front, a squad of cadets in blue-gray uniforms, drawn up in line, were preparing to go through with some military manœuver, while their bright bayonets glinted and flashed as they caught the rays of the departing sun.

Instead of returning by the way they had come, they turned to the right, and the driver gradually slackened the pace of the well-trained horses to a leisurely gait; and, as Ruth leant back in her seat, watching the rhythmical roll of the glinting wheels and listening to the low, pleasant tones of her husband's voice, some of the joy which filled her heart was reflected in the sweet smile on her lovely face.

Now they were driving slowly past a spot, where not many months ago no sign of a habitation stood—simply a vacant lot, smooth and green, with picturesque stretches all about it.

Ruth, looking in the direction, gave a sudden start, and under the shock of a great surprise, turned and stared at Dr. Leslie with a perfectly amazed countenance.

"Arcadia Villa," he said, with an enigmatical smile, answering her astonished look. "The place, since you saw it last, has been converted into a private home—one of beauty and loveliness. The magical transformation took place during your absence from the city."

"It is indeed very lovely," she said, earnestly, then sat silent and thoughtful, while her eyes roved admiringly from object to object on the beautiful place.

In the midst of the exquisite park-like lawn, which was adorned with statuary, fountains, and grass plats with evergreen shrubs, stood an imposing mansion, surmounted by a red-tile roof. The walls were built of pressed brick, with trimmings of light stone highly carved, and from base to finale, its proportions were symmetrical and its ornamentation artistic.

Sloping away to the right of the lawn, a flight of stone steps, some two hundred feet or more in length, led gradually down to an artificial lake, whose pebbly margin was fringed with ferns, grasses and lilies.

On either end of the steps were tall, white marble vases filled with gorgeous foliage and tropical plants.

To the left of the lake, a pretty gondola, gayly painted, lay motionless at its anchorage, while two snow-white swans gracefully breasted the sunlit ripples of the crystal waters.

Directly in front of the splendid portico of the residence, which stood out from the facade in perfect symmetry, was a fountain of exquisite design, and beneath, sparkling water played amid gold and silver fish and rare water plants.

The winding walks were paved in imitation of Roman Mosaic, and a circular carriage-way led up through the *porte-cochere* to the left of the mansion.

The beautiful and luxuriant woodland in the rear, which was artificially embellished, made an appropriate background to this sumptuous home,

fit for the habitation of a fairy queen or an imperial princess.

An ornamental iron fence seven feet high and painted black surrounded the handsome grounds, and protected them from curious intruders.

When the carriage had reached the upper part of the grounds, along the public driveway, Ruth turned to Dr. Leslie and said, "I recall when Agnes and I drove past here the last time together, we spoke of this situation as being a most charming site for a private residence. I'm so glad that some one with cultivated and artistic tastes has converted it into this ideal home—a home that excels outwardly at least, anything that my most vivid fancy had ever pictured."

"Would you care to go in and see the grounds?" Dr. Leslie asked, taking out his watch and glancing at it. "There is a large conservatory on the other side which cannot be seen from here," he resumed, "and which leads out from the dining-room, and this, in turn, leads into an admirably arranged winter garden, which I think is one of the most attractive features of the grounds

"This winter garden is entirely covered with glass, and contains running fountains, graveled walks, palms and rustic seats. Then adjoining this are the hothouses, where flowers, grapes and other small fruits, also vegetables, are cultivated."

Ruth turned quickly, with a surprised look, and for a second or two regarded him intently.

"Are you in earnest about going in? Do you know these people? Are they friends of yours?"

With that soft pleasant laugh, which she loved so dearly to hear, he took the pains to answer each one of her questions.

"Yes, I'm in earnest about seeing the grounds. I know 'these people,' and they are friends of mine, and yours, too, my dear, as for that matter."

Meanwhile John had pulled up the horses, and sat patiently waiting for orders.

"Well, shall we go?" Dr. Leslie asked, with an amused twinkle in his eyes.

"Oh, certainly, I shall be glad to do so; and anywhere else you go, I'll cheerfully follow," lowering her voice at the last sentence, to the exclusion of the driver.

Dr. Leslie gave the order, and when the carriage drew up beside the porch, and he had helped her out, he suggested that they would better go into the house first before making a tour of the grounds, playfully remarking that it was not always wisest to take too many liberties even with one's friends.

"But our cards," said Ruth, with all a woman's punctiliousness about such formalities. "You know I haven't any with me; for I didn't expect to go calling."

"Oh, never mind about the cards. I'll undertake to make it all right with our friends if need be," he said, good-humoredly.

In response to their ring, it was promptly answered—not by a footman dressed in livery, as Ruth had expected to see—but a good-looking, neatly dressed maid, in the whitest of lace-trimmed cap and apron, whom Dr. Leslie addressed as Corinne, and who conducted them through the grand hall, with its tunneled-shaped ceiling and mosaic marble floor, in the centre of which a small fountain tossed a high jet of sparkling, perfumed spray, and then fell with a

melodious bubble upon a bed of rare ferns and exotics growing around its base—a hall, where here and there beautiful palms and flowers were arranged in exquisite taste—then on to the splendid drawing-room which was unrivalled in beauty and elegance, and held objects of great rarity and value.

Without waiting for them to explain the absence of cards, or even asking whom they wished to see, with a significant smile the maid quietly turned and left the room.

Ruth glanced inquisitively around, and then with a puzzled look turned to Dr. Leslie for an explanation of what to her was beginning to assume an air of mystery.

Keenly enjoying her perplexity, and with a bright smile beaming on his handsome face, he rose at once and approached her, and taking her hand in his, said:

"I have not had much experience, darling, in playing the part I've just been enacting, but you will, I know, forgive me for not sharing with you this once my little secret, and allow me now to cordially welcome you to your home—our home."

With a mingled joy and surprise unspeakable of happy wifehood gleaming from her lovely, wistful eyes—eyes still wistful, but with such a happy wistfulness, she repeated:

"My home? Our home?" raising her brows.

"Yes, darling, our home," he said gently, drawing her to him.

"It was a pet whim of mine to plan and execute this surprise for you while you were absent from the city. I employed skilled architects and artisans to faithfully carry out my designs, binding them to secrecy until such a time as I

should give them permission to speak, in order that my surprise might be complete.

"Mrs. Grayson, Carl and Nellie also cooperated with me in my scheme, but more than once, Nellie came very near betraying me, and no longer than this afternoon, when we were leaving, I heard her say to her mother: 'Oh, mamma, I did so want to tell her.' Though you gave no sign of having heard, I felt quite sure that you did, and, perhaps, wondered what she meant; and I suspect, had you asked me then and there for an explanation, I would have told you the whole truth, rather than the least suspicion of something unpleasant, and which you did not understand, should have given you a moment's pain. I knew you would suspect nothing by Mrs. Grayson and Nellie bidding you good-bye, since this was not an ususual thing for them to do whenever you went out; and then Mrs. Grayson did it in such a natural matter-of-course way this afternoon, that no one not in the secret would have thought that she was carrying out her part of a carefully arranged program.

"But come," he went on, "don't you want to see something of the home that I've prepared for you? Let us go over the house now, or some parts of it, and to-morrow you can inspect the grounds, conservatory and winter garden at your leisure. I cannot tell you what a labor of love all this has been to me, and the sequel proves—"

"That it has not been in vain," Ruth said quickly, finishing the sentence for him. Then she looked up in his face and asked in a trembling, pleading voice and through a mist of tears:

"Oh, how shall I ever repay you; how shall I ever thank you?"

"By always loving and trusting me as you do now," he answered fervently.

Ruth's implicit faith and confidence in him had always touched him deeply, and he had often told her it had been a strong stimulus, which helped to uplift and inspire him to become more and more worthy of her confidence and love.

As they went out into the grand hall, whose splendid uplook could not be surpassed in delicacy, beauty and magnificence, and passed from room to room, Dr. Leslie gave her a succinct account of everything pertaining thereto, and of other things which he thought would interest her.

The picture gallery, which opened on the main hall, Ruth decided to inspect another time, when she should have ample leisure to enjoy and admire its rare treasures; so, after a hurried survey of one or two paintings, they crossed the main hall and entered the music room, which was presided over by the Muses.

Ruth must have been talking of Agnes' and Carl's approaching marriage elsewhere, for she now said:

"It seems I can scarcely wait until December, when Agnes is to come," then she paused and added quickly, "Not that I need or want another thing to add to my happiness. Oh, no; for there's nothing lacking—not one thing— but it will be so hard to keep all this from her, just to enjoy her surprise as you did mine—and yet, I so long that she should know."

Dr. Leslie smiled indulgently, walked to the piano and opened it, then turning to her, asked:

"Won't you play something, dear? Anything, so it be a song."

"With pleasure," she said, seating herself at the splendid instrument, and taking off her gloves, began to glide her fingers over the keys like a professional, to test its melody and sweetness.

"Home, Sweet Home," was the song she sang, and as the delicious harmony filled the room her entrancing voice gained in enchanting, seductive sweetness, which beguiled the very soul of her listener, as though he were listening to some holy chime from the spirit world, and gradually he seemed lifted up into a purer and holier atmosphere, far above the bitter tears, the cruel sorrows, and the restless passions of a sin-sick world. Ruth's singing always moved him thus; and when she rose from the seat, she looked gratefully up into his face with the sweetest smile, in answer to his words of honest praise.

All of the rooms opening on the main hall had sliding doors, hung on noiseless tracks, and so arranged that on any special occasion or fete night, the beautiful rooms could be thrown into one grand salon, which, when lighted by two large crystal chandeliers, made a spectacle so brilliant and beautiful, that nothing short of fairy-land could equal it.

From the pretty breakfast room, with its graceful and artistic ornamentation, they went into the spacious and lofty dining-room, with its splendid carvings, symbolic emblems and music gallery, and Ruth laughingly said that they should never have any use for this magnificent room except on "state occasions."

"What about the reception you intend to give Carl and Agnes?" Dr. Leslie asked, smiling—"and Eloise and Howard a little later?"

"Oh, they will be 'state occasions,' of course," she answered, laughing. "But I mean to have them all here together; and then there's something else," she said. "Oh, such a charming little entertainment that occurs to me I should like to give—won't you let me do it—may I do just as I please about it?"

She went up to him and laid her hand on his arm, smiling pleadingly, up into his face.

"Why, certainly, darling; anything you like," he said, responding to her sweet coaxing. "But you've made me inquisitive. Am I to know now, or you'll tell me later on?"

"I have no perfected plan yet; the idea just came to me. But it is something in connection with my mission school. And you are very sure you'll not object?" she persisted, gazing at him earnestly.

"Most emphatically I shall not object," he returned, with a laugh.

Upon the superb buffet in this room, were the most beautiful cut-glass, exquisite china and solid silver, many of these pieces being bridal gifts from personal friends.

In the centre of a long table, which was covered with a cloth of green plush, richly embroidered, stood an elegant silver epergne, one of Mrs. Grayson's gifts.

From this room they passed on to the library, where Ruth found in the low, open bookcases all her favorite volumes and many more besides, in handsome and costly bindings.

Taking Ruth's hand and placing it upon his arm, Dr. Leslie said, "Now, come with me, there is one other place I want to show you—something I've reserved to show you last—a sort of

shrine or private sanctum I've set apart for your own special use, where no one, no, not even I shall dare to intrude without first obtaining permission from your royal highness."

As he was speaking he led her up the marble stairway, capped by a classic balustrade, and passed through her bedroom and dressing-room, with their delicate rose-colored and silver hangings, and paused in front of a closed door, over which hung a blue velvet portiere, stamped with a Venetian pattern of gold, and sweeping the curtain aside, he gently slided the door on its track.

In the deepening twilight Ruth could not see clearly the interior of the handsome apartment; but the next moment, when Dr. Leslie crossed the floor and shuttered the large plate-glass window, which had been thrown open that morning to admit the pure air and warm sunshine, then touched an electric button, instantly a hundred gas jets, it seemed to her. sprang into flame, and involuntarily she uttered a cry of surprise and delight.

Never was the truly poetical theory more gracefully and effectively put into practice than in this restful, fascinating retreat. It was a dream of beauty and magnificence.

The velvet panels of the walls were embroidered in gold, silver and chenille, with a border of velvet in contrasting color, embroiderd in the same way, while the ceiling was painted in graceful designs of wreaths and ribbons, encircling a centre piece significant of rosy sleep. The rugs were of exquisite designs and texture, and seemed almost too dainty to be trodden upon.

The framework of the furniture was gold and

white upholstered with satin brocade of pale pink.

There were a small sofa and chairs, and a satin-wood desk, beautifully finished. Upon this lay a paper knife of tortoise shell and gold, with rubies and diamonds in the handle, and which Dr. Leslie told her was a gift from Carl. Near it was a beautiful white velvet covered Bible, with clasp and binding of gold, and upon opening the lid, Ruth read on the blank leaf, in Mrs. Grayson's large, familiar hand:

"To dear Cousin Ruth
From her loving little friend,
Nellie Leslie Grayson."

On the little table, near the window, was a photograph of Agnes, in a delicately carved oxidized silver frame; and as soon as Ruth saw this, with a throbbing heart she took it up, looked at the sweet face long and steadily, then replacing it upon the table, she went up to her husband, holding out both hands to him, her eyes still shining through a dew of tears, though the smile upon her lips was full of happiness, and said in a voice low and sweet—sweeter in intonation than he had ever heard:

"Oh, Dr. Leslie—Ralph, my generous and noble husband, if I could but thank you as I feel! But—," she hesitated a moment, looking fondly into his splendid eyes—"but, as much as I appreciate and admire the beautiful things in life—in Nature as well as in Art—God's creations and man's inventions, as much as I shall love and thank you for this grand and luxurious home, with all its rich and costly surroundings, which, even in its influence is uplifting and ennobling, yet, to me, it would be but a dreary place in-

deed, a mere gilded cage, if the light and hope of your dear presence were withdrawn, and I knew that I had not that richest blessing of a wedded woman's life—her husband's love; and which, with the crowning glory of the love of Christ, is more to me than all the world beside."

His hand, which had softly held hers as she spoke, now closed tightly over them, he led her to a seat and sat down, and then putting his arm around her, drew her head to his bosom. It seemed to him in that one short hour she had become tenfold more attractive and dearer to him than ever before.

"Ruth, my darling, I cannot tell you how inexpressibly happy you have made me; and never before have I realized so sensibly, that God ever plans for us a better way. Years ago, at the very beginning of my career, when there fell a blight upon my hopes, affections and aspirations, when all my most carefully laid plans were thwarted and arrested, and for a time all the possibilities of life seemed like a failure, in my feeling of despair and sense of helplessness I was quite ready to give up, and say, there is nothing in human existence worth while. I could not see with my blinded eyes that those bitter experiences were a part of the divine plan—the divine discipline, and that an unerring Hand was guiding my faltering feet—not in the pleasant paths I would have chosen, but over a rugged and perilous pathway, which was to bring me up to that height whence I could have a broader, deeper and higher view of life, and where the Infinite One—the Author of Christianity—was to teach me my duty to and bring me in closer touch with my fellow-men; teach me the lesson that

so many of us are so slow to learn, that living works, rather than cold, dead formalities, are required by Him who went about doing good.

"I feel and know now as I never did before that the Christianity that Christ taught when upon earth, and the Christianity that He is teaching us to-day, is not limited by any narrow boundaries which our puny, finite mind can compass, but is broad and grand, and as unfathomable and measureless as the great sea of space itself.

"Then let us, my darling, as His stewards, whom we are, and whom He has so richly blessed, thank Him daily for the honor and privilege which He has given us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, give consolation to the broken-hearted and carry the gospel of peace and good-will to men.

"Yes, our work lies all around us. The present is ours, and we must make the most of it."

Dr. Leslie paused, reached out his hand and took the little Bible from the table, and opening it at the one hundred and forty-fifth Psalm, laid the book upon his knee, and resumed:

"Let us take fresh courage and heart of hope, my dear, as we set out on our life's journey together, first consecrating our home which He has only lent us for a little while, and all that we have and are, to His service and His glory. If He has given us more of the temporal blessings of life than some others, it is not that we may selfishly use and enjoy them, but that we may more largely benefit humanity and alleviate its sufferings—that all these beautiful things by which He has surrounded us may be a stimulus and an inspiration to better and higher things, imperishable.

"Let us, as we struggle up through conflict to that high destiny which the God of love, and the Father of mercy would have His children reach, and which destiny Christ the Son of God has made possible, bravely take up the duties of life, bear patiently its burdens, be true to ourselves and to the Kingdom of God. We must follow Jesus—the Christ—if we would wrest from life and the world the victories that are possible for all.

"His cross must be our cross—His will our will, and then when we are done with the things of this world, and if we have come out of the battle pure and strong, we can with hope and certainty look forward to a home in that bright and beautiful Beyond, where you and I, and all the blood-washed that are near and dear to us here, shall be there forever united, yea, under golden skies, and with the blessed Christ, in whose footsteps we have ever tried obediently to follow all the way."

THE END.

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AT
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